

# **THE BATTLE FOR THE RUSSIAN** **ORTHODOX CHURCH**

*Vladimir Moss*

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>5</b>
<b><u>1. WHERE IS THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE GOING?</u></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><u>2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CATACOMB CHURCH IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA</u></b>	<b>15</b>
<b><u>3. THE SERGIANIST CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM</u></b>	<b>26</b>
<b><u>4. THE FREE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH</u></b>	<b>38</b>
<b><u>5. THE RIGHT WAY OF RESISTING APOSTASY: A REPLY</u></b>	<b>73</b>
<b><u>6. THE CHURCH THAT STALIN BUILT</u></b>	<b>77</b>
<b><u>7. EMPIRE OR ANTICHRIST?</u></b>	<b>81</b>
1. The Soviet Antichrist	81
2. The Second World War	83
3. Repentance and the Triumph of Orthodoxy	89
<b><u>8. THE TRAGEDY OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD</u></b>	<b>91</b>
<b><u>9. IN SEARCH OF NEVER-LOST RUSSIA</u></b>	<b>100</b>
Introduction	100
1. Fr. Gregory's Political Manichaeism	101
2. Fr. Gregory and the Symphony of Powers	106
3. Church and State in Muscovite Russia	111
4. Church and State in Synodal Russia	115
5. Church and State in the Soviet Period	119
I. The August, 2000 Council of the MP	123
II. The October, 2000 Council of ROCOR	128
<b><u>10. CAN THE LEOPARD CHANGE HIS SPOTS?</u></b>	<b>133</b>
1. The Leopard and his spots	133
2. The Leopard and his cubs	137
3. The Leopard and his Tamer	139
4. The Leopard as a Protected Species	141
<b><u>11. LAZARUS SATURDAY, THE CHICAGO DIOCESE AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE</u></b>	<b>143</b>
<b><u>12. THE FORKED TONGUE OF ARCHBISHOP KYRILL</u></b>	<b>148</b>
<b><u>13. THE SPIRITUAL DARWINISM OF FR. ALEXANDER LEBEDEV</u></b>	<b>159</b>
<b><u>14. ON TRUE AND FALSE MARTYRS</u></b>	<b>166</b>
<b><u>15. THE CANONICAL POSITION OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH ABROAD</u></b>	<b>172</b>
<b><u>16. "OIKONOMIA" AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE</u></b>	<b>180</b>
1. The Attitude of Metropolitan Anastassy to other Jurisdictions Abroad	181
2. The Attitude of Metropolitan Anastassy to the MP	185
3. Metropolitan Anastassy and the Greek Old Calendarists	192
Conclusion	194
<b><u>17. ROCOR AUTONOMY – A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE?</u></b>	<b>195</b>

<b><u>18. A PROPOSAL TO THE 2006 SOBOR OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH ABROAD</u></b>	<b>199</b>
<b><u>19. "THE SACRED LIE"</u></b>	<b>204</b>
<b><u>20. METROPOLITAN ANASTASY, THE NAZIS AND THE SOVIETS</u></b>	<b>211</b>
<i>ROCOR in Germany</i>	211
<i>The German Invasion of Serbia</i>	213
<i>The German Invasion of Russia</i>	214
<i>The Soviet Propaganda Offensive</i>	220
<i>The Tragedy of the Vlasovites</i>	222
<i>Conclusion</i>	225
<b><u>21. A DOGMATIC-CANONICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROCOR-MP UNIA</u></b>	<b>227</b>
<i>I. Sergianism</i>	228
<i>II. The New Martyrs</i>	234
<i>III. Ecumenism</i>	242
<i>Conclusion</i>	249
<b><u>22. HOW THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE FELL FROM GRACE</u></b>	<b>251</b>
1. Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa	251
2. <i>The Rise of Metropolitan Sergius</i>	255
3. <i>The Church Decentralized</i>	259
4. <i>Metropolitan Sergius Forms a Synod</i>	265
5. <i>The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius</i>	267
6. <i>The Birth of the Catacomb Church</i>	271
7. <i>The Martyrdom of the Catacomb Church</i>	279
8. <i>ROCOR and Metropolitan Sergius</i>	285
9. <i>Three Holy Hieromartyrs</i>	291
10. <i>Secret Catacomb Councils</i>	298
<i>Conclusion: The Cost of Sergianism</i>	302
<b><u>23. HOW THE MP FELL UNDER THE 1983 ANATHEMA</u></b>	<b>308</b>
1. <i>False Moscow Councils</i>	308
2. <i>The Communists Become Ecumenists</i>	314
3. <i>Rapprochement with the Catholics</i>	321
4. <i>"Nikodimovschina"</i>	326
5. <i>The Anathema against Ecumenism</i>	332
<b><u>24. LESSONS IN RUSSIANNES FROM A SOVIET POLITICIAN</u></b>	<b>336</b>
<b><u>25. THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION</u></b>	<b>344</b>
<b><u>26. THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE</u></b>	<b>355</b>
<b><u>27. ROCOR AND THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY</u></b>	<b>365</b>
<b><u>28. "DEMONIC GRACE" AND METROPOLITAN SERGIUS</u></b>	<b>367</b>
<b><u>29. JUDAS, PILATE AND ROCOR</u></b>	<b>383</b>
<b><u>30. OPEN LETTER TO PROTOPRESBYTER VALERY LUKIANOV</u></b>	<b>386</b>
<b><u>31. THE PELAGIAN ROOTS OF SERGIANISM</u></b>	<b>391</b>
<b><u>32. PATRIARCH CYRIL, ABORTION, GAYS AND THE GODDESS APHRODITE</u></b>	<b>409</b>
<b><u>33. A HISTORY OF THE FALL OF ROCOR, 2000-2007</u></b>	<b>413</b>
<i>Introduction: The 1990s</i>	413
1. <i>"The Second October Revolution"</i>	430

<i>II. The Fall of the New York Synod</i>	435
<i>III. The Creation of the Mansonville Synod</i>	445
<i>IV. The Russian True Orthodox Church</i>	455
<i>V. The Plotters fall into their own Net</i>	464
<i>VI. Heresy and Corruption in Suzdal</i>	470
<i>VII. The End-Game</i>	482
<i>Conclusion</i>	488
 <b><u>34. RUSSIAN ORTHODOX – ROMAN CATHOLIC RELATIONS: A SHORT HISTORY</u></b>	<b>500</b>
1. The Middle Ages	500
2. The Unia of Brest-Litovsk	503
3. The Eighteenth Century	509
4. From 1812 to the Crimean War	514
5. Russian Intellectuals and Catholicism	520
6. The Vatican and Soviet Russia	528
7. The Vatican and Poland	533
8. Catholic-Orthodox Ecumenism and “Nikodimovschina”	536
9. The Fall of Communism	540
10. The Summit in Havana	548
 <b><u>35. THE SPIRITUAL STATUS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION</u></b>	<b>550</b>
 <b><u>36. IS THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE CRUMBLING AT LAST?</u></b>	<b>555</b>

## FOREWORD

This book is a collection of articles written during the last twenty-five-odd years on the crisis enveloping the Russian Orthodox Church. As the Soviet Union began to collapse in 1989-1990, its faithful ecclesiastical slave, the Sovietised Moscow Patriarchate (MP), also began to break up. The Catacomb or True Orthodox Church, which had always refused to recognise Soviet power or its "Soviet church", emerged from the underground, and the Russian Church Abroad (ROCORA) created parishes on Russian soil into which both "catacombniks" and former members of the patriarchate entered. It was a time of great hope for the resurrection of Russian Orthodoxy. Tragically, those hopes have not been fulfilled. From the mid-1990s, and especially since KGB colonel Putin's arrival at the height of power in 2000, the MP has recovered its position in society while its opponents have warred amongst themselves and fragmented. Most recently, the Russian Church Abroad led by Metropolitan Laurus has joined the MP, thereby betraying the Orthodox Faith and the ecclesiastical course of the Russian Church Abroad throughout its history. These essays reflect that process by one who participated in it both inside and outside Russia.

Since writing these essays, I have changed my attitude towards some of the church figures mentioned in them. However, I have decided to make only minor editorial changes to the texts, insofar as I believe the arguments set out in them remain valid.

Although the picture here drawn may be depressing, the purpose of this book is constructive. It is hoped and believed that by studying the history of the last eighteen years, we, the True Orthodox Christians of Russia may repent of our sins and learn from our mistakes and unite again on a firm basis of faith and love. Then, through the prayers of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors, Holy Russia will rise again from the ashes of the present neo-Soviet catastrophe, to the glory of Christ and the salvation of very many throughout the world!

*May 1/14, 2016.  
East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, Surrey. England.*

## **1. WHERE IS THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE GOING?**

*Can two walk together if they are not in agreement with each other?*  
Amos 3.3.

Forty years ago, the well-known scientist and theologian, Professor Ivan Andreyev, who had been a confessor of the faith in the Solovki camps, posed the question: does the Moscow Patriarchate have grace – that is, the grace of true and valid sacraments? After a thorough examination of the question from a dogmatical and canonical point of view, he gave a clear and categorical reply: no.<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that the majority of Russian Orthodox Christians today do not agree with this judgement. However, many believers, especially from the intelligentsia, now agree that during the Stalin period the Moscow Patriarchate underwent a very serious fall, a sickness close to death, from which it must recover if the Russian Church is destined to survive. The aim of this article is to pose the question: has anything changed in the last 40 years that would force us to return again to the question of the status of the Moscow Patriarchate. In other words: has the Moscow Patriarchate recovered from its fall, is it beginning to get better, or is this sickness incurable?

Let us look at Andreyev's main argument. In 1927 the Moscow Patriarchate under the leadership of Metropolitan Sergius declared that the joys of the Soviet government are the joys of the Church, and its failures – the failures of the Church, and entered into a pact with the government, condemning and persecuting all those who refused to recognize Sergius and his declaration. In the opinion of Andreyev, this was the sin of Judas who betrayed Christ, in the given instance the betrayal of His Body on earth, the Church, into the hands of His worst enemies. This sin, in the words of Hieromartyr Victor, Bishop of Glazov, was "worse than heresy"; it was complete apostasy. Moreover, sin his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon had anathematised the Soviet government in 1918, the Moscow Patriarchate was now bound by this anathema; for the text of the anathema clearly forbade the children of the Church from having anything to do with the condemned government.

It is necessary to emphasise that this opinion was shared by almost all the leaders of the Russian Church who rejected the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius. Thus on July 22, 1928 (Old Calendar), Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev declared that the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate were apostates and had to be submitted to the same canonical punishments as the apostates of ancient times, the libellatici – that is, fifteen years' deprivation of communion after their repentance and return to the Church. Within Russia,

---

<sup>1</sup> English translation: I.M. Andreyev, *Is Grace Present in the Soviet Church?* Wildwood, Alberta: Monastery Press, 2000.

one of the leaders of the Catacomb Church who admitted that the sergianist church might still have grace was Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan: "The sacraments performed by the sergianists who have been correctly ordained are undoubtedly saving sacraments for those who receive them with faith and simplicity, without reasonings and doubts about their validity, and who even do not suspect anything wrong in the sergianist organization of the Church." But at the same time Cyril pointed out that "they serve for the condemnation of those who perform them and of those who approach them well understanding the unrighteousness existing in sergianism and who by their non-resistance to it reveal a criminal indifference to the mocking of the Church. That is why it is necessary for an Orthodox bishop or priest to refrain from communion with the sergianists in prayer. The same necessity exists for those laymen who have a conscious attitude towards all the details of Church life."<sup>2</sup>

Four main changes have taken place since that time. First, the attitude of most of the foreign Orthodox Churches has changed towards the Moscow Patriarchate. This was noticeable already in 1945, when representatives of other foreign Churches were present at the enthronement of Patriarch Alexis.

The question is: did these foreign hierarchs sanctify the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate by their presence, or, on the contrary, were they defiled by it? The Apostle Paul says: "Do not become a participant in the sins of others; keep yourself in purity" (I Timothy 5.22). In 1945 the other foreign Churches became participants in the sins of the Moscow Patriarchate. One should not forget that in 1923 the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate entered into communion with the "Living Church", which had been anathematised by Patriarch Tikhon. This communion did not sanctify the "Living Church", but only condemned the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

One must also not forget how Stalin rewarded the patriarchs who supported the Moscow Patriarchate in 1945. As V. Alexeyev informs us on the pages of the journal of the Central Committee of the CPSS, *Agitator* (№ 10, 1989): "The order was given to hand over 42 objects from the vaults of the Moscow museums and 28 from the Zagorsk state museum, mainly objects of Orthodox worship, which were used as gifts to the Eastern Patriarchs... Thus, for example, Patriarch Christopher of Alexandria was given a golden panagia with precious stones, a gold cross with precious stones, a full set of hierarchical vestments of gold brocade, a mitre with precious stones... Naturally, a response was expected from the patriarchs, and they did not tarry to express the main thing - eulogies... Patriarch Christopher of Alexandria said: 'Marshall Stalin... under whose leadership military operations are being conducted on an unprecedented scale, is aided in his task by an abundance of Divine grace and blessing...'"

---

<sup>2</sup> L. Regelson, *Tragedia Russkoj Tserkvi 1917-1945*, Paris, 1977, p. 495.

Secondly, the Catacomb Church, which was flourishing during the 1930s and during the war, has suffered serious losses. Catacomb bishops in the camps had to choose: either accept Patriarch Alexis or be executed. Unfortunately, some of them chose the easier path. Since then, although the Catacomb Church has continued to exist<sup>3</sup>, her influence on the broad masses of people has been limited.

Of course, this does not justify the Moscow Patriarchate. Even if every single true bishop in the Soviet Union were to die or be killed, this would not make apostates into Orthodox. St. Seraphim of Sarov prophesied that the bishops of the Russian Church would depart from the true faith; he said that he had prayed fervently for them for several days, but the Lord had refused to have mercy on them. This prophecy is printed in the Divine service books of the Moscow Patriarchate like the writing on the wall of the palace of the Babylonian King Balthasar (Daniel 5). Before the revolution St. John of Kronstadt said that it was quite possible that the whole of the Russian Church would fall away from the truth. This had happened to such famous Churches as the Roman and Carthaginian, and it could happen again in Russia. The Lord said that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church (Matthew 16.18). But He did not say where, or in what country. "The Spirit breathes where It wants, and you hear Its voice, and do not know where it is coming from or where it is going" (John 3.8). Grace can leave us easily and very quickly. In the early Church a bishop was thought to lose grace if he simply handed over the books of the Church to the persecutors of the Church. And in the Greek Church under the Turkish yoke many Christians sought martyrdom in order to wipe out the sin of their youth, when they had been forced to accept Islam and thereby fell away from the faith.

Thirdly, since 1960 the Moscow Patriarchate has joined the ecumenical movement and now de facto recognizes the mysteries of all the heretical churches that are living parts of the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches: that is, the Monophysite churches in the East, and the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. True, the Moscow Patriarchate sometimes criticizes the Protestant formulations of the WCC; but this does not prevent her representatives from praying with Protestants, and the Protestant Pastor Billy Graham was invited to preach in an Orthodox cathedral in Moscow. The Moscow Patriarchate has deliberately not followed the recent decision of the Jerusalem Patriarchate to stop these ecumenical activities.<sup>4</sup>

Recently the ecumenical movement entered a new phase of "super-ecumenism", in which it seeks closer links with non-Christian religions. And the Moscow Patriarchate had accepted this form of ecumenism also. Thus

---

<sup>3</sup> In fact, there were still fair numbers of Catacomb priests, and a few bishops, until the 1970s. However, by the time of the writing of this article, in 1990, their numbers had dwindled.

<sup>4</sup> Archbishop Cyril of Smolensk, "Vremia dejstvovat'", *Moskovskij Tserkovnij Vestnik*, № 17, December, 1989, p. 3.



Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev was present at the “prayers for peace” in Assisi, Italy in 1986 at which were present not only the Pope of Rome and the Anglican Primate, but also the Dalai Lama (who considers himself a god) and North American worshippers of the snake. Again, Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk, the head of the publications department of the Moscow Patriarchate, has recently made the following sensational declaration on Soviet television: “When I shall have my own publishing press, I shall publish the Koran according to the most ancient manuscripts belonging to the disciples of the Prophet Mohammed, and I shall give it to the Soviet Muslims.” One should note that the publications department of the Moscow Patriarchate has not published a single Orthodox catechism or theological textbook for mass consumption in the whole history of its existence.<sup>5</sup>

The apostolic canons threaten a bishop or priest who prays with heretics or who recognizes their sacraments (not to speak of the ‘sacred writings’ of the non-Christian religions) with defrockment. Moreover, ecumenism has been condemned by the Fathers of Holy Athos, the True Orthodox Church of Greece and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. This means that if until 1960 the Moscow Patriarchate was a schismatic and apostate organization, now it is also heretical.

Fourthly, the Soviet government has changed its position of open hatred for the Church for a neutral position – although, in the opinion of many, this change is temporary and superficial. However, the question arises: how can a political change influence the status of a Church in the eyes of God? If the Moscow Patriarchate before Gorbachev was an apostate and heretical organization, then the coming to power of such a liberal as Gorbachev has changed the situation only in one respect: for the apostate organization it has become easier and less dangerous to repent. If, however, repentance is not forthcoming, this deprives the Moscow Patriarchate of its last possible excuse. For in essence political changes have nothing to do with Church matters; they only change the external framework within which the living, internal battle between truth and falsehood, righteousness and sin, is carried on.

But the patriarchate, someone may object, is not made up only of hierarchs. There are also the priests and laity, who are against the cowardly politics of the bishops, who have expressed themselves against the subjection of the Church to the God-fighting state, and who have been imprisoned for their faith – for example, Fr. Gleb Yakunin and the philosopher Boris Talantov, who called the patriarchate “an agent of worldwide antichristianity”. Can one condemn the patriarchate as a whole if amongst its members there are such undoubtedly courageous people?

It is not our business to condemn persons. Our business is only to determine where the True Church is. And in order to answer this question,

---

<sup>5</sup> *Vestnik Informatsionnogo Tsentra*, № 31, September 26, 1989, pp. 203.

we have to ask: can a priest or layman be Orthodox while his bishop is a heretic? The unambiguous reply of Church consciousness is: no. We Christians are rational sheep, and our duty is to use our reason in order to determine whether our pastor is a true pastor or a hireling, or something still worse – a wolf in a shepherd's clothing. In the words of the Lord, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow after Me" (John 10.37). But those who follow after apostates will be devoured by wolves.

The Church is the Body of Christ, and the eyes of the body, according to St. Gregory the Theologian, are the bishops. If the eyes are in darkness, as the Lord says, "then the whole body will be in darkness" (Matthew 6.23; Luke 11.34). Therefore if, in the words of the Lord, "thine eye offends thee", - that is, if your bishop is a heretic, "pull it out and cast it away" (Matthew 18.9).

St. Basil the Great says that it is better not to have a bishop than to have a false one. Why? Because, as St. John Chrysostom says, he who communes with one who has been excommunicated from the Church is himself excommunicated; and as Saints John of Damascus and Theodore the Studite say, those in communion with heretics are themselves heretics, even they personally do not agree with their heretical leaders. This follows from the integral character of the Church in which we all – bishops, priests and laity – have the right and duty to check out the genuineness of our bishops' confession of faith.

This was the teaching of the Eastern Patriarchs in their Epistle of 1848, which was directly mainly against the Roman Catholic teaching. For according to Catholicism, all power and responsibility rests only on the Pope, who must therefore be infallible, otherwise the whole Church would fall together with him. But in Orthodoxy there are no infallible bishops, just as there are no irresponsible priests or laity.

It follows that Zoya Krakhmalnikova is wrong when she writes: "We are not responsible for Sergius' declaration, for there is no collective guarantee in the Church".<sup>6</sup> There is a collective guarantee in the Church, which is called *love*. Love is the blood of the Body of Christ which circulates throughout the body "that there should be no divisions in the body, but that all the members of it should have the same care for each other. Therefore if one members suffers, all the members suffer with him: if one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with him. And you are the Body of Christ and members in particular" (I Corinthians 12.25-27).

Therefore if a bishop is a heretic, the priest who represents him during the Divine Liturgy confesses heresy, and the laity who commune enter into communion with heresy. In such a situation the Canons of the Church say that every Christian can break communion with the heretic even before a

---

<sup>6</sup> "Once more on the bitter fruits of the sweet captivity", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 17, 1989, p. 5.

Synod of bishops has condemned him (15<sup>th</sup> Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople, 861). For the Lord says: "If the blind lead the blind, they both fall into a pit" (Matthew 15.14). And St. John the Apostle writes in his second Epistle (2.20): "You have an anointing from the Holy One and you all have knowledge." If we all have knowledge, we all bear responsibility, and will answer for how we have used that knowledge at the Terrible Judgement.

But the Moscow Patriarchate has replaced this teaching on the Church with a purely Roman Catholic teaching. As Sergius Ventsel writes: "If Metropolitan Sergius was ruled, not by personal avarice, but by a mistaken understanding of what was for the benefit of the Church, then it was evident that the theological foundation of such an understanding was mistaken, and even constituted a heresy concerning the Church herself and her activity in the world. We may suppose that these ideas were very close to the idea of the Filioque: since the Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son, that means that the vicar of the Son... can dispose of the Spirit, so that the Spirit acts through Him ex opere operato.. It follows necessarily that he who performs the sacraments of the Church, 'the minister of the sacrament', must automatically be 'infallible', for it is the infallible Spirit of God Who works through him and is inseparable from him... However, this Latin schema of the Church is significantly inferior to the schema and structure created by Metropolitan Sergius. In his schema there is no Council, or it is replaced by a formal assembly for the confirmation of decisions that have already been taken – on the model of the congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

"The place of the Council in his structure of the Church is taken by something lacking in the Latins' scheme – Soviet power, loyalty to which becomes in the nature of a dogma... This scheme became possible because it was prepared by Russian history. But if the Orthodox tsar and the Orthodox procurator to some extent constituted a 'small Council', which in its general direction did not contradict... the mind-set of the majority of believers, with the change in world-view of those came to the helm of Soviet power this scheme acquired a heretical character, since the decisions of the central ecclesiastical authorities, which were associated in the minds of the people with the will of the Spirit of God, came to be determined neither by a large nor by a small Council, but by the will of those who wanted to annihilate the very idea of God (the official aim of the second 'godless' five-year-plan was to make the people forget even the word 'God'). Thus at the source of the Truth, instead of the revelation of the will of the Holy Spirit, a deadly poison was substituted... The Moscow Patriarchate, in entrusting itself to the evil, God-fighting will of the Bolsheviks instead of the conciliar will of the Spirit, showed itself to be an image of the terrible deception of unbelief in the omnipotence and Divinity of Christ, Who alone can save and preserve the Church and Who gave the unlying promise that 'the gates of hell will not

overcome her'... The substitution of this faith by vain hope in one's own human powers as being able to save the Church in that the Spirit works through them, is not in accord with the canons and Tradition of the Church, but ex opere operato proceeds from the 'infallible' top of the hierarchical structure."<sup>7</sup>

One can often hear another argument. Let us concede that our hierarchs are apostates. Nevertheless, we must not break communion with them for the sake of the unity of the Church and the unity of the Russian land. But we must remember that the unity of the Russian Church was destroyed already in 1927 by Metropolitan Sergius and his Moscow Patriarchate, which strengthened this satanic deed by betrayal and the shedding of the blood of the best representatives of the Russian land. For, as Sergius Ventsel writes, "by the hands of the same Metropolitan Sergius the truly free and canonical Catacomb Church, which was close to victory over the beast, was almost destroyed and deprived of the possibility of witnessing."<sup>8</sup> Therefore we have to ask ourselves the question: is it possible to preserve the unity of the Church through unity with the destroyers of that unity? What kind of unity would that be?

Not every kind of unity, says St. Gregory the Theologian, is a good unity. There is the unity of thieves and murderers. And the Synod of the Russian Church Abroad recently declared that the strength of the Church does not consist in it's the integrity of its external organization, but in the unity in faith and love of her devoted children.

So what does the unity of the Moscow Patriarchate mean, and on what is it based? This false unity is based on a lie – the most terrible lie about the good of communism, on the non-existence of persecutions, on the so-called political crimes of the martyrs of Christ, and on fear – that is, the fear to remain alone, in the desert, without support from the authorities of this world. But the Apostle says: "God has not given us a spirit of fear" (II Timothy 1.7). And now in the Ukraine, the former bastion of the Moscow Patriarchate, this false unity, strengthened not be the grace of God but by the weapons of the antichristian government, is falling apart with amazing swiftness. For, as the Lord says, "every city or house that is divided within itself will not stand" (Matthew 12.25).

Let us return to the words of the Apostle: God gave us "the spirit not of fear, but of strength, of love and of chastity". In fact, the strength of one man in the truth is very great. St. Maximus the Confessor was a simple monk, but he said: "Even if the whole world enters into communion with the heretical patriarch, I will never do so." And several years later, the Orthodox world,

---

<sup>7</sup> Polosin (Sergius Ventsel), "Razmyshlenia o Teokratii v Rossii", *Vestnik Khristianskogo Informatsionnogo Tsentra*, № 48, November 24, 1989, pp. 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Polosin, op. cit., p. 11.

which almost completely fallen into the heresy of Monothelitism, recognized that St. Maximus had been right. One more example: in 1439 all the Orthodox hierarchs signed a unia with Rome at the false council of Florence – except for one, St. Mark, Metropolitan of Ephesus. When the Pope heard that St. Mark had not signed the unia, he said: “In that case we have achieved nothing.” And indeed, when the apostate hierarchs returned home, the people rejected them, so great was the authority of St. Mark. The Russian people also rejected the leader of their Church and their representative at the false council, Metropolitan Isidore, who later became a cardinal in Rome. For “there is no insufficiency in the guard of the Lord, and with it there is no need to seek help” (Sirach 40.27).

God has given us “the spirit of love”. But what does true love mean? Love, according to the word of God, signifies the keeping and carrying out of the commandments of Christ (Wisdom 6.17; John 14.23; II John 6). St. Photius the Great says that the greatest act of love is the confession of the truth. Only he loves who is in the truth.

But love which consists in hiding the truth from each other is not love, but in the best case sentimentality, and in the worst – cowardice and cruelty. St. Paul says that even if we give all our property to the poor and our bodies to be burned, but do not have true love, then all our efforts are in vain (I Corinthians 13). For an external act of self-sacrifice and heroism can conceal an inner lie. St. John Chrysostom says that even the blood of martyrdom cannot wash out the sin of schism from the True Church, which is the sin against love.<sup>9</sup> The Moscow Patriarchate is in schism. Her hierarchs have broken all ties of love with their brothers who departed into the catacombs, with their brothers who were forced to emigrate, with Saints Vladimir and Olga and Sergius of Radonezh, who created the unity of the Russian land, with Saints Alexander Nevsky, Jonah and Hermogen, who defended the Russian land against heresy, and with Saints Seraphim of Sarov, John of Kronstadt and Tikhon of Moscow, who clearly called the Soviet government antichristian.

The Holy Scriptures teach us that we are saved through faith, but that “faith without works is dead” (James 2.17). What is the first, most basic work of faith? Let Abraham, “the father of the faithful”, show us: “And the Lord said to Abraham: Depart from thy land, and thy kindred and the house of thy father, and to the land which I will show thee... And Abraham went, as the Lord told him” (Genesis 12.1, 4). In other words, the first work of faith is obedience to the command of God to leave one’s country, Babylon, the community of the apostates. Abraham was not shown where he had to go. But God had prepared for him not only the promised land, but also a priest, Melchizedek, who was higher than all the priests of the Old Testament, and descendants who would number Christ Himself, the incarnate Son of God.

---

<sup>9</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 4.4.

God calls us, too, to leave the “spiritual Babylon”, the community of the apostates, leave the whore, that is, the false church which sits on the red beast, that is, communism, drinking “the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (Revelation 17.6). Then God will receive us. For “come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you” (II Corinthians 6.17). And again: “Come out from her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins” (Revelation 18.4). “Let us go forth therefore unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come” (Hebrews 13.13, 14).

*Moscow.*

*January 22 / February 4, 1990.*

*Sunday of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.*

(First published in Russian in *Vestnik Khristianskago Informatsionnago Tsentra*, № 19, March 6, 1990, pp. 9-14, and reprinted in *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 8, 1990, pp. 9-12)

## **2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CATACOMB CHURCH IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA**

Elder Ambrose of Optina once wrote that when the Russian Empire fell the world would enter the last period of human history, the period described in symbolic form in the *Apocalypse (Revelation)* of St. John the Theologian. This was the period when the Church, like the woman clothed in the sun in the twelfth chapter of the *Apocalypse*, would flee into the wilderness, away from public view, and when the faithful Christians would pray in caves and dens of the earth, like the Catacomb Christians of Ancient Rome. This picture came true after the revolution of 1917.

As the Russian Church in Exile said in its Second Pan-Diaspora Council in Karlovtsy in 1938: "Since the epoch we have lived through was without doubt an epoch of apostasy, it goes without saying that for the true Church of Christ a period of life in the wilderness, of which the twelfth chapter of the *Revelation* of St. John speaks, is not, as some may believe, an episode connected exclusively with the last period in the history of mankind. History show us that the Orthodox Church has withdrawn into the wilderness repeatedly, from whence the will of God called her back to the stage of history, where she once again assumed her role under more favourable circumstances. At the end of history the Church of God will go into the wilderness for the last time to receive Him, Who comes to judge the quick and the dead. Thus the twelfth chapter of Revelation must be understood not only in an eschatological sense, but in a historical and educational sense as well: it shows up the general and typical forms of Church life. If the Church of God is destined to live in the wilderness through the Providence of the Almighty Creator, the judgement of history, and the legislation of the proletarian state, it follows clearly that she must forego all attempts to reach a legalization, for every attempt to arrive at a legalization during the epoch of apostasy inescapably turns the Church into the great Babylonian whore of blasphemous atheism. The near future will confirm our opinion and prove that the time has come in which the welfare of the Church demands giving up all legalizations, even those of the parishes. We must follow the example of the Church prior to the Council of Nicaea, when the Christian communities were united not on the basis of the administrative institutions of the State, but through the Holy Spirit alone."<sup>10</sup>

Today, in 1996, we might be tempted to think that the catacomb phase of Church history is over. The Soviet Union has fallen, freedom and democracy reign, and the Catacomb Church herself is a small, divided remnant that must soon be swallowed up – so human wisdom tells us – in one or another above-ground jurisdiction. I believe that this judgement is wrong for two main reasons, one obvious and the other more profound.

---

<sup>10</sup> Cited by A. Gustavson, *The Catacomb Church*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1960, p. 102.

The obvious reason is that militant anti-theism may return at any moment. It may come as a sudden, savage onslaught similar to that of 1917. Or it may come like the creeping bureaucratism of the European Union.<sup>11</sup> But in any case, as long as atheist, western modes of thought continue to dominate the world, the tendency for a secular state to take control of an ever-increasing proportion of our lives will remain. And for that reason the model of catacomb, anti-state Church life will remain relevant.

But there is another, still more important reason why we must study the experience and confession of the Catacomb Church, not as an historical relic, nor even as a mode of life which we may be forced to undertake again in the future, but as a matter of the greatest *contemporary* significance. And that is that *the whole tragedy of Russian Church life since the Civil War has consisted either in the tardy and reluctant acceptance of the necessity for a descent into the catacombs, or in the outright refusal to contemplate such a path.* It follows that if Russia is ever to recover from her present terrible spiritual and moral humiliation, the nature of this tragedy must be thoroughly understood and repented of.

The necessity for the Russian Church to enter into a totally uncompromising struggle with the new state order (more precisely: *anarchy*), and therefore to descend into the catacombs if that state order did not yield its position, was proclaimed *and commanded* at the very highest level, by the Local Council of the Russian Church held in Moscow in 1917-18.

Thus on January 19, 1918, his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon issued his famous anathema against the Bolsheviks, in which he said: "I adjure all of you who are faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ *not to commune with such outcasts of the human race in any way whatsoever*; 'cast out the wicked from among you' (I Corinthians 5.13)."

There has been much argument over the true significance of this anathema. Thus it has been argued that this decree did not anathematise Soviet power as such, but only those people who were creating disturbances and committing sacrilege against the Church in various parts of the country. However, this argument fails to take into account several facts. First, the patriarch himself, in his declarations of June 3/16 and June 18 / July 1, 1923, repented precisely of his "anathematisation of Soviet power".<sup>12</sup> Secondly, even if the decree had not formally anathematised Soviet power as such, since Soviet power sanctioned and initiated the acts of violence and sacrilege, the faithful were in effect being exhorted to have nothing to do with it. And thirdly, when the decree came to be read out at the Council three days later, it was enthusiastically

---

<sup>11</sup> V. Moss, "The European Union – a new Totalitarianism?", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 45, № 2, March-April, 1995; reprinted in Russian in *Pravoslavnaia Tver'*, №№ 5-6, May-June, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> M.E. Gubonin, *Akty Sviateishago Patriarkha Tikhona*, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1994, pp. 280, 286.



endorsed by it in terms which leave no doubt but that the Council understood the Patriarch to have anathematised precisely Soviet power.

This endorsement by the Council had even more authority than the Patriarch's anathema, and quite clearly ordered the faithful to take the most hostile attitude possible to the Bolsheviks: "The Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia in his epistle to the beloved in the Lord archpastors, pastors and all faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ has drawn the spiritual sword against the outcasts of the human race – the Bolsheviks, and anathematised them. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church adjures all her faithful children not to enter into any communion with these outcasts. For their satanic deeds they are cursed in this life and in the life to come. Orthodox! His Holiness the Patriarch has been given the right to bind and to loose according to the word of the Saviour... Do not destroy your souls, cease communion with the servants of Satan – the Bolsheviks. Parents, if your children are Bolsheviks, demand authoritatively that they renounce their errors, that they bring forth repentance for their eternal sin, and if they do not obey you, renounce them. Wives, if your husbands are Bolsheviks and stubbornly continue to serve Satan, leave your husbands, save yourselves and your children from the soul-destroying infection. An Orthodox Christian cannot have communion with the servants of the devil... Repent, and with burning prayer call for help from the Lord of Hosts and thrust away from yourselves 'the hand of strangers' – the age-old enemies of the Christian faith, who have declared themselves in self-appointed fashion 'the people's power'... If you do not obey the Church, you will not be her sons, but participants in the cruel and satanic deeds wrought by the open and secret enemies of Christian truth... Dare! Do not delay! Do not destroy your soul and hand it over to the devil and his stooges."<sup>13</sup>

Now although it was unprecedented for a Local Church to anathematise and in effect declare war against a government in this way, there have been occasions in the history of the Church when individual hierarchs have not only refused to obey or pray for a political leader, but have actually prayed *against* him. Thus in the fourth century St. Basil the Great prayed for the defeat of Julian the Apostate, and it was through his prayers that the apostate was killed, as was revealed by God to the holy hermit Julian of Mesopotamia. This and other examples show that, while *the principle of authority as such* is from God (Romans 13.1), individual authorities are sometimes not from God, but are only *allowed* by Him, in which case the Church must offer resistance to them out of loyalty to God Himself.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> "Iz sobrania Tsentral'nogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Oktyabr'skoj revoliutsii: listovka bez vykhodnykh dannyx, pod № 1011", *Nauka i Religia*, 1989, № 4 ®; partly translated in Gustavson, *op. cit.*, p. 9. One member of the Council said: "If the father, mother, brothers and sisters did not receive the returning evil-doer, but expelled him, saying: 'You are a scoundrel, your hands are covered in blood, you are not our son, nor our brother,' the disorders would cease" (*Deyania Sobora*, vol. 6, p. 40).

<sup>14</sup> V.A. Konovalov, *Otnoshenie Khristianstva k sovetskoj vlasti*, Montreal, 1936, p. 35.

The Council's completely uncompromising attitude towards Soviet power was again revealed on January 20, the day after the patriarch's anathema, when the Bolsheviks issued their "Decree on the Freedom of Conscience". This was the Bolsheviks' fiercest attack yet on the integrity of the Church; for it forbade religious bodies from owning property, from levying dues, from organizing into hierarchical organizations, and from teaching religion to persons under 18 years of age. Thus, far from being a measure *for* freedom of conscience, it was, as the Council said, a decree on freedom *from* conscience, and an excuse for large-scale pillaging of churches and murders, often in the most bestial manner.<sup>15</sup> "Under the guise of taking over the Church's property," declared the Council, the decree "aims to destroy the very possibility of Divine worship and ministration." Therefore "all participation, either in the publication of the law so injurious to the Church, or in attempts to put it into practice, *is not reconcilable with membership of the Orthodox Church.*"

Now it is a striking fact that these powerful and authoritative words, pronounced at the highest level of Church government, *were never repeated or echoed in official Russian Church life again* – although, as we all know, the savagery of the Soviets not only did not decrease but reached unheard-of proportions. The only significant exception to this statement must be considered the Council of the Russian Church in Exile in Karlovtsy, Serbia, in 1921, which, following the defeat of the Whites in the Civil War, called for an armed crusade against Soviet Russia. The decisions of this Karlovtsy Council have often been reviled by the Moscow Patriarchate as irresponsible politicising; but it must be admitted that they were closer to both the letter and the spirit of the January, 1918 decisions of the Moscow Council than those of any subsequent above-ground Council in Russia.

For the bitter fact is that, from about the beginning of 1922, the Church inside Russia began to negotiate with Soviet power, attempting to win concessions from the anathematised authorities on the basis of precisely that decree on freedom of conscience whose application the Council of 1917-18 had declared to be *irreconcilable with membership of the Orthodox Church!* In fact, the concessions won by the Church were negligible, while the concessions she made to the Bolsheviks were, as we shall see, major and very damaging. They delayed but did not prevent the Church's eventual descent into the catacombs after Metropolitan Sergius' notorious declaration of 1927; and they made that descent more difficult and more costly than it would otherwise have been.

It is necessary at this point to reject the possible charge that, by accusing the Church of having made harmful concessions even before 1927, we are in

---

<sup>15</sup> Professor Ivan Andreyev, "The Catacomb Church in the Soviet Union", *Orthodox Life*, March-April, 1951. For details of this persecution, see Vladimir Rusak, *Pir Satany*, London, Canada: Zarya, 1991.

effect casting stones at the radiant image of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa and the other Church leaders who supported their general church policy. However, this is not the case at all. First, whatever harmful concessions Patriarch Tikhon, for example, may have made, no one has ever doubted that he made them, not out of motives of personal fear or gain, but in great torment of spirit and for the sake of what he perceived to be the interest of the Church as a whole. Moreover, the fact that he had a martyric end – he was poisoned, according to the witness of his cell-attendant<sup>16</sup> – shows that the Lord counted him worthy of glory, whatever his mistakes. Secondly, while all concessions which bring damage to the Church must be condemned, they are not all of the same order or magnitude. Although Patriarch Tikhon negotiated with Soviet power and made damaging concessions to it, he never, unlike Metropolitan Sergius, denounced his fellow Christians as “counter-revolutionaries”, thereby sending them to certain death; nor did he commemorate Soviet power at the Divine Liturgy, as Sergius did. And thirdly, we must take note of the attitude of those members of the Church hierarchy, such as the future Catacomb Hieromartyrs Archbishop Theodore (Pozdeyevsky) of Volokolamsk and Bishop Mark (Novoselov) of Sergiev Posad, who, while criticising and opposing the Patriarch’s concessions, did not break communion with him – but did break communion with Metropolitan Sergius.

Archbishop Theodore’s position was expressed by the future Archbishop Leontius of Chile as follows: “The whole Orthodox episcopate and people venerated him [Vladyka Theodore] for his principled, uncompromising and straight position in relation to Soviet power. He considered that until the Orthodox Church received the right to a truly free existence, there could be no negotiations with the Bolsheviks. The authorities were only deceiving them, they would fulfil none of their promises, but would, on the contrary, turn everything to the harm of the Church. Therefore it would be better for his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon to sit in prison and die there, than to conduct negotiations with the Bolsheviks, because concessions could lead, eventually, to the gradual liquidation of the Orthodox Church and would disturb everyone, both in Russia and, especially, abroad. [He said this] at a time when his Holiness the Patriarch had been released from prison. Archbishop Theodore honoured and pitied his Holiness, but was in opposition to him. In spite of the persistent request of his Holiness that he take part in the administration of the patriarchate, he refused.”<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> The cell attendants’ testimony is in Archpriest Michael Polsky, *The New Martyrs of Russia*, Wildwood, Alberta: Monastery Press, 2000, pp. 278-279.

<sup>17</sup> “Vospominania, 1917-1940 gody”, in Nun Ioanna, “Zhizneopisanie arkhiepiskopa Volokolamskogo Feodora (Pozdeyevskago), posledniago rektora Moskovskoj Dukhovnoj Akademii”, *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn’*, № 9 (549), September, 1995, p. 24.

Let us turn to one very instructive example of how damaging disobedience to the January, 1918 decisions of the Moscow Council could be – the famous affair of the requisitioning of church valuables by the Bolsheviks in 1922.

When the Bolsheviks demanded that the Church give up her valuables to a State commission so that they could be sold and the proceeds given to the starving in the Volga region, the Patriarch agreed on condition that those valuable did not include the most sacred vessels used in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Most commentators have interpreted this as a wise compromise on the part of the Patriarch. However, this was not the opinion of no less an authority than the holy Elder Nectarius of Optina, who said: “You see now, the patriarch gave the order to give up all valuables from the churches, but they belonged to the Church!”<sup>18</sup>

It is easy to see why the elder was right and the patriarch wrong in this matter. First, the money gained from the sale of the valuables did not go to feed the poor, but to promote the socialist revolution worldwide.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, the patriarch’s decision placed the parish priests in the very difficult situation of having to choose between disobedience to the patriarch and cooperating in what many of them must have considered to be a near-sacrilegious stripping of the churches for the benefit of the Antichrist. And thirdly, the patriarch’s decision did not in any case prevent bloodshed, as he had hoped. Thus according to one estimate, 2,691 married priests, 1,962 monks, 3,447 nuns and an unknown number of laymen were killed on the pretext of resistance to the seizure of church valuables in the country as a whole.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the patriarch’s decision fell between two stools. It neither saved the lives of the starving, on the one hand, nor protected the churches from attack, on the other.

Soon after this, the patriarch made another disastrous concession: on April 22 / May 5, 1922, at the insistence of the Bolsheviks, he convened a meeting of the Holy Synod and the Higher Church Council, at which he declared (decree № 342) that “neither the epistle, nor the address of the Karlovtsy Synod [to the Genoa conference] express the voice of the Russian Church.” He ordered the dissolution of the Church in Exile’s Higher Church Administration and

---

<sup>18</sup> Matushka Evgenia Rymarenko, “Remembrances of Optina Staretz Hieroschemamonk Nektary”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 26, № 3, May-June, 1986, p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Thus Trotsky, who, in addition to being the head of the secret commission for the requisitioning of the valuables, also headed the commission for their monetary realization, wrote in a submission to a session of that commission on March 23: “For us it is more important to obtain 50 million in 1922-23 for a certain mass of valuables than to hope for 75 million in 1923-24. The advance of the proletarian revolution in just one of the large countries of Europe will put a stop to the market in valuables... Conclusion: we must hurry as much as possible...” (Cited in “Mucheniki Shuiskie”, *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia*, № 170, III-1994, p. 190.

<sup>20</sup> Gregory Ravich, “Ograblennij Khristos, ili brilliانتy dlia diktatury proletariata”, *Chas-Pik*, № 18, p. 26. According to another estimate, the anti-Church campaign cost the lives of 28 bishops, 1,215 priests and over 8000 people altogether (Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Bolshevik Regime, 1919-1924*, London: Fontana Press, 1995, p. 355).

the transfer of all power over the Russian refugees in Europe to Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris.<sup>21</sup> Although all the émigré hierarchs (*including* Metropolitan Eulogius) agreed that the decree was issued under duress and was therefore not binding<sup>22</sup>, it was later used by pro-Soviet hierarchs to cause serious divisions in the Russian Church in Exile.

Neither did the Bolsheviks show gratitude to the patriarch. Only a few days later, he was placed under house arrest, which gave the renovationist heretics the chance to seize control of the administrative machinery of the Church!

It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Russian Church's annus horribilis of 1922 was the result of the Church leadership's decision to abandon the no-compromise position adopted at the 1917-18 Council and negotiate with the Soviets. Nothing was gained by it, and a great deal was lost. Moreover, once the renovationist schism came into being, the patriarch felt compelled to make even more compromises with the Soviets in order to defeat what he considered to be the more immediate threat of the Living Church. It all went to show that, as the English proverb puts it, "when you sup with the devil, you must use a very long spoon..."

So what was the alternative? Outright rejection of the Bolsheviks' demands, leading to a descent of the Russian Church into the catacombs as early as 1922? Was such an alternative practical?

Open opposition, to the extent of war, against the powers that be is not unheard of in Russian Church history. St. Sergius of Radonezh blessed a war of liberation against the Tatars in the fourteenth century, and St. Hermogenes, Patriarch of Moscow, called for another such war against the Polish occupiers of Moscow in 1611. And it was precisely to St. Hermogenes' example that Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), first hierarch of the Russian Church in Exile, had appealed at the Karlovtsky Council of 1921.

---

<sup>21</sup> That this decision was indeed dictated by the Bolsheviks is proved by recent information, according to which, on April 20 / May 3, two days before the patriarch's decree, a secret meeting of the presidium of the GPU – Comrades Ushinsky, Menzhinsky, Yagoda, Samsonov and Krasikov – took place, at which it was decided "to summon Tikhon and demand of him that he publish within 24 hours the expulsion from the Church, defrocking and removal from their posts of the above-mentioned clergy [the leaders of the Russian Church in Exile]. If Tikhon refuses to carry out the above-mentioned demands, he is to be immediately arrested and accused of all the crimes he has committed against Soviet power" (*Istochnik*, № 3, 1995, p. 116).

<sup>22</sup> Nor did the patriarch himself consider it binding, for in later acts he implicitly recognized the authority of the émigré Synod of Bishops. For example, he accepted the decision of the Synod to appoint Metropolitan Platon as ruling bishop of the Russian parishes in America. See Igumen Luke, "An Answer to the Orthodox Church in America's Document, 'Why Deepen the Schism?', *Orthodox Life*, vol. 40, № 6, November-December, 1990, pp. 13-14).

However, “Patriarch” Alexis II of Moscow is not inspired by such examples. As he said in an interview, although Patriarch Tikhon “did not hide his sharply negative attitude towards the Bolshevik order,” - unlike Alexis himself, who never hid his glowingly *positive* attitude towards it, declaring as late as July 17, 1990<sup>23</sup> that he was praying for the preservation of the Communist Party! – “he did not consider it possible to lead a ‘crusade against communism’. Of the two evils – to declare war against the ‘reds’ and thereby submit the whole Orthodox flock to unavoidable devastation, or by the expression of formal loyalty to the State while preserving the purity of the faith to save that which still could be saved – he chose the lesser, that is, the second. The Church could not, did not have the right to, depart into the catacombs. She remained together with the people and drank the cup of suffering which fell to her lot to the dregs.”<sup>24</sup>

These words astound by their falsehood and hypocritical self-righteousness. Patriarch Tikhon did indeed choose what he saw as the lesser of two evils – a wrong choice, as is argued here, but one made from honourable motives, for the sake of his flock. And out of compassion and respect for him, who truly “drank the cup of suffering to the dregs”, most of the people stayed with him – even those who, like Archbishop Theodore, disagreed with him.

But would the Patriarch have agreed that “the Church could not, did not have the right to, depart into the catacombs”? Certainly not! Indeed, in his *Life* of one of the first catacomb bishops, Hieromartyr Maximus of Serpukhov, Protopresbyter Michael Polsky writes: “His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon expressed to Vladyka Maximus (who was at that time simply a doctor) his tormented doubts about the benefit of further concessions to Soviet power. In making these concessions, he had with horror become more and more convinced that the limits of the ‘political’ demands of Soviet power lay beyond the bounds of faithfulness to Christ and the Church. Not long before his death, his Holiness the Patriarch expressed the thought that apparently the only way out for the Russian Orthodox Church to preserve her faithfulness to Christ would be to depart into the catacombs in the very near future...”<sup>25</sup>

So “Patriarch” Alexis is contradicted by Patriarch Tikhon himself! Far from not having the “right” to depart into the catacombs, the patriarch considered that it would one day be the *duty* of the Church to do so. The only question was: when?

---

<sup>23</sup> The day of the commemoration of the Royal Martyrs!

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Anatoly Krasikov, “Tretij Rim i bolsheviki (bez grifa ‘sovershenno sekretno’)”, in S.V. Filatov (ed.), *Religia i Pravda Cheloveka*, Moscow: Nauka, 1996, p. 198.

<sup>25</sup> Polsky, *Novie Mucheniki Rossijskie*, Jordanville, 1949-57, vol. 2, p. 21.

Moreover, it was precisely to “remain together with the people” who themselves remained together with Christ, that it was necessary to depart into the catacombs. For when Metropolitan Sergius issued his notorious declaration in 1927, the people rejected it in droves. Thus 90% of the Urals parishes sent it back without an answer; and it is calculated that more than fifty bishops inside Russia, and thirty bishops abroad, refused to support Metropolitan Sergius.<sup>26</sup>

And did the Soviet bishops “remain with the people”? Not at all! In relation to that large part of the people who remained faithful to the truth they acted as spies and informers. And in relation even to their own flock, they can hardly be said to have shared their sorrows to any significant extent – at least in the post-war period. Rather they lived with all the perks of Soviet functionaries – dachas, limousines, access to special stores obtained by their secret party cards – in a word, like those “princes” of which it is written: “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom is no salvation” (Psalm 145.3).

This complete lack not only of solidarity (solidarnost'), but also of Orthodox Catholic conciliarity (sobornost') with the believing people is witnessed even from patriarchal sources. Thus according to Archimandrite Polycarp (Grishin), all the delegates of the Orel-Briansk diocese to the 1988 local council were imposed by the local bishop obedient to a list put forward by the Bolsheviks.<sup>27</sup> And at the same council Archbishop Chrysostom of Irkutsk said: “We hierarchs are perhaps the most rightless people in the Russian Orthodox Church. When they transfer us, no one asks us, Why and what for? But we act in the same way with our clergy. We are rightless before the Patriarch and the Holy Synod; they take no notice of us, and we act in the same way.”<sup>28</sup>

Of course, we can only speculate what would have happened if the Russian Church had chosen to refuse any compromise with the Bolsheviks in 1922. Undoubtedly there would have been great suffering and many martyrdoms – which is what happened, in any case, and has not really ended even now. Quite possibly, a large proportion of the Church population would have fallen away – which is what happened, in any case, by falling into the renovationist and sergianist schisms. But it is also possible that the Bolsheviks, faced with a vast and determined church population united by a holy zeal behind their lawful patriarch, would have backed away from direct confrontation – and made concessions themselves, resulting eventually in the crumbling of their power. And even if the Bolsheviks had not backed down,

---

<sup>26</sup> *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'*, № 20 (1545), October 15/28, 1995, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Demetrius Kolesnichenko, “O rasprostraneniі ereticheskikh i iazycheskikh ucheniі sredi iskonno pravoslavnykh narodov SSSR”, *Svobodnaia Rossia*, № 3 (96), 17 July, 1990, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Valery Borschev, “Vozvrashchenie dykhania”, in *Na puti k svobode sovesti*, Moscow: Progress, 1989, p. 283.

we know that by the power of faith the people of God have often “become mighty in war and put foreign armies to flight” (Hebrews 11.34). There is no reason why this could not have happened in the 1920s. And then how different would have been the history of the twentieth century!

However, God’s Providence uses even our sins and falls to accomplish His mysterious and perfect will. “The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble” (Proverbs 16.4). Evidently it was pleasing to Him to humble the Russian people still more for their sinfulness and lack of faith. And perhaps it was not the Lord’s will, as Catacomb Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene of Glukhov said in the 1930s, “that the Church should stand as an intermediary between Himself and the believers,” but that everyone should “stand directly for himself as it was with the forefathers”!<sup>29</sup> For this is the specific nature of Christian confession in the time of the Antichrist. And perhaps it is His will that now again, when the Russian Church and nation is incomparably weaker in human terms than it was in 1927 or 1922, *now* is the time to demonstrate that “some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God” (Psalms 19.7). For His strength is made perfect in weakness (II Corinthians 12.9).

But confession must be preceded by understanding; and if we are to make a good confession now, we must apply our understanding to the very beginning of the decline of the Russian Church from the glorious martyrdom of the Civil War years when the Church was united and defiant – that is, to the year 1922. That this year was indeed critical in the destinies of the Russian Church is indicated by a vision granted to a pious girl in 1917 and recounted by Elder Nectarius of Optina. In this vision the Apostle Peter asked the Lord Jesus Christ: “When will these torments end, O Lord?” And the Lord replied: “I will give the people until 1922: if they do not repent and come to their sense, then everyone will perish.”<sup>30</sup> 1922 did not mark the end of the Russian people’s sufferings, but rather of their intensification, being the year in which the first major schisms arose and the very name of Russia was swallowed up in that of the Soviet Union. And now, with a few exceptions, everyone is perishing....

The beginning of recovery, therefore, must consist in repentance for that failure to obey the commands of the Moscow Council of 1917-18, that failure to reject any communion whatsoever with the Soviet Antichrist, which began to show its disastrous fruits in 1922. For it was not only the Patriarch and the Church administration that failed then. If the people had resisted the patriarch as they had resisted his attempt to introduce the new calendar later, the disaster could have been avoided and the slide that ended with the sergianist apostasy could have been checked.

---

<sup>29</sup> E.L., *Episkopy-Ispovedniki*, San Francisco, 1971, p. 92.

<sup>30</sup> *Zhitia Prepodobnykh Startsev Optinoj Pustyni*, Jordanville, 1992, p. 361.



For if, as the True Church always believed, the Soviet regime was established, not by God, but by the devil (Revelation 13.2), then only outright condemnation of, and refusal to work with, the satanic regime could draw upon the people the blessing of God. For “what accord hath Christ with Belial? Or what hath a believer in common with an unbeliever?” (II Corinthians 6.15). Therefore, says the Apostle, “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them...” (Ephesians 5.11).

Thus the significance of the Catacomb Church for Russia and the world consists the fact that she shows to us the *normal*, and perhaps the only *spiritually safe* mode of existence for the Church in our apocalyptic times in which there are no more God-established Orthodox autocracies. Perhaps, through the prayers of the new martyrs of Russia, a God-protected Orthodox autocracy may one day be established again, as the prophecies indicate. But this can only be an exception to the basic trend, a brief oasis of calm in the swirling maelstrom of apostasy. In general, in the apocalyptic era we have entered since 1917, the Christian can expect no support from the powers that be, but must rather expect snares and temptations. And so, learning from the example of Patriarch Tikhon and the other Church leaders who had to encounter the first blast of the Antichrist’s assault, we must “flee to the mountains” and “not go down to take what is in the house” of what used to be our earthly homeland (Matthew 24.16-17). Confessing openly that we are “strangers and pilgrims” on this earth, we must “go forth to Him *outside* the camp, bearing His reproach...” (Hebrews 13.13).

March 16/29, 1996.

(First published in *Living Orthodoxy*, № 130, vol. XXII, № 4, July-August, 2001, pp. 8-15)

### **3. THE SERGIANIST CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM**

The Moscow Patriarchate's forcible seizure of the Hebron monastery in July this year (1997), and its winning *de facto*, if not yet *de jure* control of the convents of the Russian Church Abroad in Jerusalem, has delivered a serious blow to the forces of True Orthodoxy. The seriousness of the blow resides not so much in the material loss of the monasteries, important though that is, as in the spiritual humiliation of the Russian Church Abroad, and in her perceived weakness in the face of external pressure. Those confessors of the truth who resisted that pressure - Bishop Barnabas, Archimandrite Bartholomew, Abbess Juliana - have been publicly humiliated and banished by their own first-hierarchy, Metropolitan Vitaly. The main traitor and appeaser - Archbishop Mark - has been placed in charge of ROCOR's Mission to the Holy Land only months after the first-hierarchy severely rebuked him for his treacherous fraternization with Alexis of Moscow (alias KGB agent "Drozdov"), saying that he had "lost the gift of discernment". As a result of the abject apology of the first-hierarchy of ROCOR to the Muslim Arafat and Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem on July 13, and the expulsion of the confessors on July 29-30, the last remnants of True Orthodoxy must be deemed to have surrendered to an unholy alliance of "World Orthodoxy", Islam and Communism in the land of the God-Man's Death and Resurrection - and even the tacit support of the Jews has not encouraged ROCOR to undertake a more determined defence of her heritage.

How did this shameful surrender take place? And what are the lessons for the rest of ROCOR that still remains in freedom?

#### **1. On Obedience to the ROCOR Synod.**

The main argument of the appeasers in their shameless attack on Abbess Juliana has been "obedience". How often has this argument been used in the history of twentieth-century Orthodoxy as a pious-seeming cloak to justify precisely *disobedience* to the sacred canons of the Church and *surrender* to the enemies of Holy Orthodoxy! Was this not the main weapon used by Metropolitan Sergius to crush the opposition of the Catacomb Church? We shall return to the comparison with Metropolitan Sergius later. In the meantime let us enquire whether Abbess Juliana was really disobedient.

It must be emphasized, first, that abbots, abbesses and elders have considerable authority in the Orthodox Church to decide what is permitted and what is not permitted in their monasteries and in relation to their own spiritual children. As Sister Marina (Chertkova), Abbess Juliana's assistant, rightly says: "Abbesses are the mistresses in their communities." It is known, for example, that St. Ambrose of Optina defied his local bishop with regard to the Shamordino nuns whose spiritual father he was, saying: "There is a Vladyka higher than all vladykas".

Bishops can overrule abbots and abbesses in the running of their monasteries only in extreme cases, when the abbot or abbess is clearly sinning against the dogmatic or moral tradition of the Church. It is obvious that Abbess Juliana was defending, rather than sinning against, the tradition of the Church.

In fact, when the Synod of Bishops ordered, in its meeting in New York on May 13, that the chief heresiarch of modern times should be allowed into the holy places under ROCOR's jurisdiction and treated "with honour and respect", it was clearly *they* who were disobeying both the canons of the Church and a whole series of earlier unrepealed orders and testaments of ROCOR's Synod and first hierarchs. The canons do not permit heretics to perform services in the churches of the Orthodox ("Patriarch" Alexis wanted to serve at the tomb of Archimandrite Antonin). And the ROCOR Synod's ukaz of April 19, 1994 was clearly in accordance with the canons when it declared: "The clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate are not allowed to carry out any kind of Divine services (that is: put on an epitrachelion, perform a litiya or prayer service, etc.) on the territory of our monasteries."

So Abbess Juliana was clearly acting *in obedience* both to the canons and to the whole tradition of ROCOR in the Holy Land, as well as in complete agreement with ROCOR's own highest authorities in the Holy Land at the time (Bishop Barnabas and Archimandrite Bartholomew), when she refused admittance to KGB Agent Drozdov and his suite. The Synod's ukaz of May 13, 1997 contradicted both the sacred canons, which every clergyman swears to uphold, and the tradition of their own Church. Therefore Abbess Juliana was quite justified in refusing to obey disobedience.

## **2. On Free Access to the Holy Places.**

The critics of Abbess Juliana point to the fact that access to the Holy Places is guaranteed by law for all pilgrims. Actually, while the Oak of Abraham, situated on the grounds of the Hebron monastery, is clearly a Holy Place, the Eleon and Gethsemane monasteries are situated close to, but not precisely on, the sites of the Lord's Ascension, Agony in the Garden and Betrayal by Judas. However, assuming that the monasteries were situated on a Holy Place, let us consider the force of this argument.

Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov writes: "Such a law exists in Israel. But nobody can say with certainty that such a law is also in force on the territory of the Palestinian Autonomy. And even if it is, in view of the special military situation there (as far as Hebron is concerned, the conflicts between the Palestinians and the Jews have led, in the last two months, to tens of deaths and hundreds of people wounded), one can say that the functioning of the law is not the norm in the Palestinian Autonomy. The best proof of this is the

fact that there are differences between the various Palestinian levels of authority in evaluating the lawless actions of the Palestinian police in Hebron...

"If such a law exists in the Palestinian Autonomy, then in Hebron, in the given instance, it became quite inapplicable for us. Arafat considers that we occupy the territory unlawfully. How can we act in accordance with the law concerning the reception of visitors if we are not considered to be the owners of this place? Thus Arafat himself removes from us the basis for fulfilling the law. But we become still less responsible before this law (I repeat, if this law is in force) if the visitor who is planning to come is in the eyes of the authorities the lawful owner. Consequently, the first violators of the law are the authorities themselves, who are placing us in a position outside the law. But what fulfilment of the law is required of us here? The concept of hospitality has very little to do with this...

"As regards the attitude of the Jews to this law in the given case, it is known that, not long before the projected visit to the Holy Land of Alexis II, one of the important officials of the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs, Uri Mor, visited our monastery on Eleon with the aim of finding out what the attitude to the visit of the Moscow Patriarch was there. Our nuns replied that the arrival of the Patriarch, supposedly for the 150th anniversary of the Mission, was nothing other than a Soviet show; the 150th anniversary was an excuse, since the 100th anniversary of the Mission was celebrated triumphantly in Jerusalem in 1958 under the leadership of Archbishop Alexander of Berlin, in the presence of officials of the Jordanian state and, of course, of representatives of the Greek Patriarchate (officially the Mission goes back to its establishment by the Turkish government in 1858). To this Uri Mor replied: 'You can protest as you like.' And then he said: 'I see that your approach is difference from that in Gethsemane... *If you don't want to receive him, that is your business!*' And he added: 'Israel will never change the status quo on its territories.'

"Patriarch Diodorus' attitude to this question is also characteristic. When his emissary accompanying Alexis II was rejected, Patriarch Diodorus received the nuns of the Eleon monastery and expressed to them his principled censure. And, demonstrating his power, he said that he could enter Eleon, if he wanted, with the help of the Jewish police, but he would not do this. And he dismissed them in peace, after asking: 'Whose side is Hebron on?'

"Let us add that the Catholic monastery of the Carmelites admits nobody, and nobody has laid claims against it. As S. Chertok, a journalist living in Jerusalem, has clearly written (*Russkaia Mysl'*, N 4179, 19-25 June, 1997): 'In Israel access to the holy places is truly free. However, in closed institutions this is done at established or agreed hours, and, of course, without resorting

to force. This rule particularly applies to monasteries where order is defined by a strict rule.”<sup>31</sup>

Even if the law concerning the free access of pilgrims to the holy places were clearer and more strictly applied, it could still not apply to Patriarch Alexis for the simple reason that *he was not a pilgrim*. Having announced publicly before his visit that he was going to the Holy Land to take possession of the properties of ROCOR, he took the Hebron monastery by force in an operation that was reminiscent of the similar operations carried out by him with the aid of OMON troops in Vladivostok, Ryazan and other places. In other words, he acted like a thief - and no law, secular or sacred, can compel one to accept a self-declared thief onto one's property.

But even if such an impious law existed, it would be necessary to ignore it for the sake of piety, of the Law of God. Would the great confessors of the faith in the Holy Land - Saints Theodosius the Great, Euthymius the Great and Sabbas the Sanctified - have allowed the heresiarchs of their time to carry out services in their monasteries? It is inconceivable. The heresy that preaches that one must sacrifice the Law of God in favour of obedience to unbelieving secular authorities is known as *Sergianism* from the name of "Patriarch" Alexis' predecessor in impiety, "Patriarch" Sergius of Moscow. And it is surely no coincidence that the ROCOR Synod's punishment of those who so bravely struggled to defend her interests was meted out 70 years to the day from Sergius's notorious declaration of July 16/29, 1927...

### 3. On Obedience to Patriarch Diodorus.

What at first sight appears to be the strongest argument advanced by the critics of Abbess Juliana is the fact that ROCOR in the Holy Land commemorates Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem, and was therefore bound to receive his friends and guests. Thus according to Protopriest George Larin, who is now Archbishop Mark's deputy in the Holy Land, "we do not even have the right to perform Divine services in our churches in the Holy Land without the blessing of his Beatitude Diodorus, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and.. we perform the Divine Liturgy on antimens sanctified by his Beatitude, .. we pray for him and commemorate him in the litanies before our First-Hierarchy... When hierarchs and priests and deacons arrive on pilgrimage in the Holy Land, they do not have the right (according to the canons of the Orthodox Church) to perform Divine services even in our churches without the Patriarch of Jerusalem's special permission, which is why we go from the airport first to his Beatitude for a blessing!"<sup>32</sup>

At the same time Fr. George admits that Patriarch Diodorus "concelebrates with the Patriarch of Moscow and does not wish to concelebrate with our

---

<sup>31</sup> Letter of July 19, 1997 to Alexander Ivanovich Musatov.

<sup>32</sup> Letter of August 18/31, 1997 to Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky.

hierarchs". A strange and clearly uncanonical situation, in which the ROCOR monastics in the Holy Land already have their own first-hierarchy, but are forced to have another one - who serves with their chief enemy but not with them! Who was it Who said that one cannot serve two masters?...

Now Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem is not a heretic in the way Alexis of Moscow is. He has criticized the ecumenical movement, and in 1989 left the World Council of Churches, although it appears that he has not broken off all contact with the ecumenical organizations. But his opposition to ecumenism lacks the principled character of that of ROCOR; for he remains in full communion with all the ecumenist Orthodox. In so doing he places himself in an uncanonical situation and compels all true zealots of Orthodoxy to break communion with him. For, as St. John Chrysostom says, "he who communicates with an excommunicate is himself excommunicated".

Some people - notably, Archbishop Mark - think we should continue to have close relations with the Jerusalem Patriarchate because, like the Serbian Patriarchate, it was in communion with ROCOR in earlier decades of this century and offered it hospitality. In answer to this argument we may quote the words of the ROCOR Hieromonk Joseph of Moscow in a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly about the Serbian Patriarchate which could apply, without major changes, to the Jerusalem Patriarchate: "Now I would like to return to the last telephone conversation I had with you. This concerns Vladyka Mark's serving with the Serbs. At that time you said that some hierarchs of ROCOR, such as Archbishop John (Maximovich) and Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky) allowed this. That is understandable. You know, they were raised and looked after by pastors of the Serbian Church. We, too, love the Serbian Church and the Serbian people - the Serbian Church in the person of Patriarch Barnabas once sheltered the persecuted Russian emigre hierarchs. But times change and life does not stand still. It is already 30 years since Vladyka John died, and almost 20 since Vladyka Nikon. The Serbian Patriarch Barnabas and those Serbian hierarchs who feared nobody and offered hospitality to the persecuted Russian Church died a long time ago. The contemporary Serbian episcopate is very far from what it was in the 1930s. You know, almost the same thing has happened with the Serbian Church as happened with the Russian Church. Their episcopate has also been appointed by communist authorities, and they have also gradually departed from the purity of Orthodoxy. This is what the well-known Serbian theologian, Archimandrite Justin (Popovich), who could in no way be accused of not loving his own Serbian Church or of not being Orthodox, wrote about this: '... The atheist dictatorship has so far elected two patriarchs... And in this way it has cynically trampled on the holy rights of the Church, and thereby also on the holy dogmas.' I think that Fr. Justin had a better view of the negative processes taking place in the Serbian Church than Vladyka Mark. The first-hierarchs of the Serbian Church take an active part in the WCC; they pray with all kinds of heretics and people of other religions; they support the anti-

Orthodox initiatives of the Patriarch of Constantinople. And must we close our eyes to all this just because in the 1930s Patriarch Barnabas helped our Russian hierarchs - or because Vladyka Mark studied in the Serbian Theological University? This is simply not serious. If we're going to reason like that, and take our memories of the past as our guiding principle in our present actions, without taking into account present realities, then we can come to sheer absurdity and will not avoid serious mistakes. In that case we must have eucharistic communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople because ten centuries ago Rus' received Orthodoxy from Byzantium.

"If our relationship to the Serbian Church and people is one of unhypocritical love and gratitude, then especially now, in this difficult time for Serbia, we must help them to come to understand and see those departures from Orthodoxy which are being carried out by the Serbian hierarchy, and for which, perhaps, the Right Hand of God is sending them these horrific military trials which are taking place there. This will be the gratitude of the Russian Church to the Serbian people for the hospitality they received from it in the 1930s."<sup>33</sup>

The present writer remembers how, in the 1970s, the superior of the Hebron monastery, Igumen Ignaty, neither allowed members of the Moscow Patriarchate on the territory of the monastery (he drove them away with a stick!) nor commemorated the Patriarch of Jerusalem (although he had friendly relations with some members of that patriarchate). A former member of the Catacomb Church and a close friend of St. John Maximovich, Fr. Ignaty had the gifts of tears and prophecy and was revered as a saint even by the Muslims. He feared God alone, and therefore even the enemies of the faith, sensing his spiritual power, sought to kiss the hem of his garment as he walked the streets of Jerusalem. His example shows how ROCOR *could* have acted, relying on the power of faith alone.<sup>34</sup>

The whole tone of Fr. George Larin's letter, quoted above, is that *of course* ROCOR should *even now* remain in communion with the Patriarch of

---

<sup>33</sup> Over thirty years ago, Archbishop Averky of Jordanville wrote to Metropolitan Philaret: "With regard to the question of the Serbian Church, whose Patriarch German is a stooge of the communist Tito, as the Serbs themselves are convinced, calling him 'the red patriarch'. We have heard this from many clergy and laity who have fled from Serbia. How can we recognize, and have communion in prayer with, 'the red patriarch', who maintains the closest friendly relations with red Moscow?"

"Cannot our Hierarchical Council make *erroneous* decisions? Do we in the Orthodox Church have a doctrine about the *infallibility of every Council of Bishops*?" (Letter of September 14/27, 1966).

<sup>34</sup> And even after Fr. Ignaty's repose in 1986, there continued to be ROCOR clergy in Jerusalem who followed his example. Thus a close friend of Fr. Ignaty's, Archimandrite Nektary (Chernobyl), who had been a member of the Catacomb Church in Russia and died in 2000, "never communed with clergy of jurisdictions entering into the ecumenical World Council of Churches. He openly reproached representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate who had betrayed Holy Orthodoxy" (*Vospominania*, Jordanville, 2002, p. 9).

Jerusalem. It doesn't seem to disturb him that that the Patriarch is in communion with the whole of ecumenist "World Orthodoxy", including Alexis of Moscow, that in a recent confrontation with Constantinople over its parishes in Australia Jerusalem was forced to submit to the uniate Patriarch Bartholomew, and that the secretary-general of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Metropolitan Timothy of Lydda, has declared: "The Russian monastery of Hebron has been returned to its legal owner [i.e. Alexis of Moscow]", emphasizing that "the time has come to overcome the divisions now that the Church in Russia is free. There is only one Russian Orthodox Church and one cannot recognize as such the tiny grouping which separated from it a long time ago for whatever reasons".<sup>35</sup>

True, Patriarch Diodorus is reported to have distanced himself from that remark. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that ROCOR has gained precious little by its fawning apology to the Patriarch, and that it is quite possible that she will lose even the limited recognition she now has from the patriarchate.

So what is the point of ROCOR's presence in Jerusalem? To have a quiet life undisturbed by any conflicts with her neighbours? In that case, she would do best to give up her ineffectual pose of pseudo-independence and join either the Patriarchate of Jerusalem or the Moscow Patriarchate's Mission in Jerusalem.

Or to inherit the Kingdom of heaven through a good confession of faith, even to the shedding of blood if necessary? In that case, she should break communion with the Patriarch of Jerusalem and firmly resist all attempts of KGB agents in cassocks to "have cups of tea" and "serve Divine services" in her monasteries.

This would undoubtedly lead to confrontation, but with God's help she would undoubtedly succeed - and encourage many other covert opponents of ecumenism in the Holy Land and elsewhere. After all, "the Truth plus one is a majority". Or, as the Apostle Paul put it: "If God is with us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8.31).

One bishop critical of Abbess Juliana has written: "Obviously, it was a question of drawing a line at some point: Alexey evidently could not be received as though he were a patriarch, but the other extreme, closing the gates in the face of the delegation is another extreme, which, elsewhere might indeed be appropriate, but in the context was provocative to the local authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical. Diplomacy has little place in matters of principle, but neither, I feel, does provocation..."

These comments betray a lack of understanding of the situation in which Abbess Juliana and her fellow zealots were placed. First, she had been

---

<sup>35</sup> *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, N 221, September-October, 1997, p. 16.



ordered to receive him “with honour and respect”, which precluded treating him as though he were not a patriarch. True, the synod had given her a speech to the patriarch in which it was written: “We welcome you not as the Patriarch of all Russia, but as a guest of Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem”. But, as Abbess Juliana has written, “standing in front of the television cameras I would have been shamed in front of the whole world!!!... This seemed to me absurd. Every welcome is already a welcome, and holding in my hands the paper, the reporters could have put into my mouth completely different words. And in essence I would have had to go up to receive his blessing.”

Again, a highly respected protopriest from Russia, while criticizing the Synod for going too far in one direction, criticizes Abbess Juliana for going too far in the other, saying that she should have let Alexis in, but “drily, officially”. However, even if she had received him “drily” and “officially”, could she, a frail woman who did not have the support even of all her nuns, have prevented him from serving at the tomb of Archimandrite Antonin once he and his vast entourage had crossed the threshold of the convent? If she had tried to do so, the scandal may have been even greater, and she might well have been simply pushed aside, just as she was pushed aside at Hebron.

In any case, if the KGB Agent “Patriarch” had been allowed into the citadel of ROCOR in Jerusalem, the real relationship of ROCOR to him and his patriarchate would have been completely misrepresented and the whole world would have known who the real master, not only on Eleon, but in the Russian Church as a whole, was.

The fact is that the provocation was not on the part of Abbess Juliana, but of KGB Agent Drozdov supported by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. And since this was a matter of principle - a matter of presenting a true confession of faith before the world’s media and the world’s chief “Orthodox” heresiarch - there could be no place for diplomacy here. For if diplomacy involves giving the impression of a false confession of faith for the sake of property or the friendship of the world, a true Christian can come to no other conclusion than that it is from the evil one. As the Apostle James says: “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (4.4).

#### **4. Quo Vadis, Russian Church Abroad?**

Let us turn now from the defence of Abbess Juliana to the truly most shocking aspect of this whole affair - the letter of apology to the Muslims. There can be no doubt that Metropolitan Vitaly was forced to do this by the same man who has already defied his authority in so many ways - Archbishop Mark. In fact, Mark himself admitted to Sister Marina that he had to shout at the metropolitan to make him write the letter. This is the same Archbishop Mark who, in December of last year, without the blessing of the

metropolitan, met the false patriarch in Moscow, and was severely rebuked for that. Nor was he sent to the Holy Land in July at the bidding of the Synod - he came of his own will, having supposedly heard about the events "from the newspapers". Many suspect - and there is certainly much evidence pointing in that direction - that the events in Hebron and Jerusalem were actually planned by the Moscow Patriarch with Archbishop Mark at that December meeting.

Archbishop Mark's position in relation to Moscow is set out in a recent article in *Vestnik Germanskoj Eparkhii* (N 4, 1997). He begins by affirming that the events in the Holy Land should not stop attempts to overcome the schism with the Moscow Patriarchate - which, however, he says is a "division", not a "schism". Then he reviews the main obstacles to union in a perfunctory and misleading way. Finally, he calls for an All-Emigration Council to review relations with the patriarchate and to consider the question: "Is eucharistic communion possible with complete autonomy?" This shows where his thought is moving - towards making ROCOR a "completely autonomous" Church in communion with the patriarchate, like the Orthodox Church of America!

The failure to be accepted at Eleon was a setback for the MP, as was the initial failure to take over the Hebron monastery. The fact that the monastery was eventually taken over only by force was more than a setback - it was a public relations disaster, which threatened to become an international crisis as American senators, who included several Jews, prepared to berate the Russians for their collaboration with Arafat in the seizure of property belonging to an American-registered Church. However, the Moscow Patriarch's potentially disastrous defeat was deftly turned into a stunning victory through the good services of Archbishop Mark, who forced the metropolitan to apologize, and put the blame for the loss of the Hebron monastery, not on the communists or Muslims, but on - Abbess Juliana!

Protopriest Benjamin makes some illuminating comments on the diplomatic significance of the metropolitan's letter to Arafat: "*In the letter to Arafat there is not a word about the unlawful seizure of property, about the inhumane beating of the monastics, about the crying violation of international law, as was expressed by Archbishop Laurus in his protest. Nothing of the kind! In this address, eight days after the lawless actions of the Moscow Patriarchate with the help of the Palestinian OMON, under the guise of a 'diplomatic note' with the aim of receiving Hebron back again, there took place a complete 'whitewash' and 'justification' of all the criminals in the affair of the seizure of Hebron. Perhaps, in fact, in such circumstances Hebron will be returned to our Church: the Moscow Patriarchate would make off, as Khrushchev once made off in Cuba, having got a long way in! Perhaps... but would it not be better to sacrifice Hebron (we may even say that we do not have the strength to keep it), rather than to sacrifice our faithful monks, whose exploit we did not defend in this*

*lamentable letter. We have similarly failed to value the exploit of those who trusted us and who have been beaten up by the OMON in our homeland... This was a diplomatic failure for the whole world to see!"*

Actually, there is no hope of ROCOR getting Hebron back again. This is clear from the following report (*Church News*, August, 1997, pp. 1-2): "When two monks from the Holy Trinity Monastery in Hebron (Fathers Elias and Vladislav) expressed a desire to accompany Abbess Juliana to Chile, Archbishop Mark permitted them only to help with transporting her luggage, and then with a definite order that they return within no more than three weeks because he had assigned them to Hebron as soon as the monastery is returned to the Church Abroad! He threatened them that the responsibility for the Church Abroad not receiving back the monastery would be upon their consciences [!!!] precisely because he has no one else to send there. Both of these monks have only Russian passports and Abbess Juliana became very concerned that they might be deported from Israel by force. Therefore she applied to the Director of the Department of the Ministry for Christian Denominations, Mr. Uri Mor, asking him to suggest to Archbishop Mark that he not send those monks to Hebron. He promised this and at the same time expressed his astonishment that the Church Abroad would believe in the highly improbably possibility of Abraham's Oak being returned to her. Mor was also astonished that Archbishop Mark would appoint two monks with only Russian passports and who, therefore, might be very easily deported to Russia due to her friendly relations with the Palestinians.

"Archbishop Mark is not ashamed to be cunning: on the one hand, he fosters among the trusting members of the Church Abroad the unrealizable hope of the return of Abraham's Oak seized by the Moscow Patriarchate and, on the other, he is not afraid to send off to the punishment of the Moscow Patriarchate two monks who happened to oppose it. It seems that he 'falls between two stools', having the intention of delivering to the Moscow Patriarchate all the properties of the Church Abroad, and at the same time he is trying to avoid being called simply a traitor!"

If the idea that Archbishop Mark might actually be planning to hand over the remaining properties of the Church Abroad to the Moscow Patriarchate seems far-fetched, the following remark by his close assistant in this affair, Protopriest Victor Potapov, should convince people that such a betrayal is by no means out of the question. "We declare outright," he said in an interview with *Nezavisimaia Gazeta - Religii* (July 24, 1997), "that we consider the Church Abroad to be an inalienable part of Russian Orthodoxy and that *we would like to give over to Russia everything that we have available, and in particular also here in the Holy Land.*"<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Fr. Victor is also reported to have said that we shall get back Hebron, but we shall have to live together with the Moscow Patriarchate there - "you'll have to make room for them"!

Further confirmation of this very real possibility is provided by the news that Soviet personnel are being moved into Jerusalem to take the place of the confessors Archimandrite Bartholomew and Abbess Juliana. Thus Archimandrite Bartholomew's position as Head of the Mission is to be taken by Archimandrite Alexis (Rosenthal), of whom Sister Marina (Chertkova) has written (with Abbess Juliana's approval) that he is "a most crude and insolent man.. who is no worse at administering hidings than the Palestinian police". And Abbess Juliana's place as abbess of the Eleon monastery is to be taken, according to unconfirmed reports, by Mother Moisea, of whom a former Head of the Jerusalem Mission has written: "She was often in the USSR on secular business. On leaving France she settled in Gethsemane. In his time Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe) was warned by the Israeli police that Sister Nonna [now Mother Moisea] was known to them as a Soviet agent..."<sup>37</sup>

Where, then, is the Russian Church Abroad going? On the evidence of the events in Hebron and Jerusalem, the answer must be: straight into the coils of the Soviet Moscow Patriarchate. Last December, when Metropolitan Vitaly vigorously rebuked Archbishop Mark for his betrayal, saying that he had "lost the gift of discernment" and that the Moscow Patriarchate was "the Church of the Antichrist", the zealots of True Orthodoxy took heart, thinking that in the person of the first-hierarchy of ROCOR, at any rate, there was a man who would withstand the antichristian onslaught coming from the KGB- and Mafia-controlled Moscow Patriarchate. However, the situation has now been entirely reversed, the metropolitan has publicly disgraced his most faithful followers, and Archbishop Mark has become the de facto ruler of ROCOR, giving him a very powerful position from which to negotiate his openly declared desire to enter into communion with the false patriarchate while retaining "complete autonomy" for the Russian Church Abroad.

In July, 1927, a physical earthquake shook Jerusalem, as if heralding the spiritual earthquakes that were to come in the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of Christ, through the notorious declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, which placed the Russian Church in de facto submission to the communists. 70 years later, the contemporary leader of the sergianist heresy has come to Jerusalem, and by a naked display of brute violence has obtained from the contemporary leaders of the anti-Sergianists, the Synod of the Russian Church Abroad, another submission to the antitheist powers, another sergianist declaration (on the precise day that the first sergianist declaration was made!) - and another condemnation of the confessors of the truth. The fact that the confessors have not suffered imprisonment or torture, but "only" a physical beating, public humiliation and exile, should not hide from us the fact that the sergianist heresy has now occupied the last bastions of the truly Orthodox Church in her heartland, Jerusalem.

---

<sup>37</sup> *Church News*, June, 1997, p. 1.

Of course, with God all things are possible, and a resurrection of ROCOR is possible even now. But it will be possible only if ROCOR, on her part, outrightly rejects Archbishop Mark and his Judas-like, neosergianist betrayal of the Church into the hands of her worst enemies. It will be possible only when a return is made to obedience to the testaments of the first three first-hierarchs of ROCOR, Metropolitan Anthony, Anastasy and Philaret, to the apostolic canons of the Church which forbid praying with heretics or recognizing their sacraments, and to the command of the Apostle of truth and love, who said: *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds"* (II John 10,11).

October 2/15, 1997.  
*Saints Cyprian and Justina.*

## 4. THE FREE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

### *A Short History (1982-1998)*

#### Introduction

When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, the “second administration” of the Soviet government, the Soviet Moscow Patriarchate, continued to exist virtually unchanged, only changing its political orientation from pro-communist to pro-democratic. At this time the leadership of the healthy ecclesiastical forces opposed to the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) inside Russia was assumed by the Free Russian Orthodox Church (FROC). This article consists of a short history of the FROC and a canonical justification of its independent existence.

#### 1. Origins

The origins of the FROC go back to January 5/18, 1981, when a priest of the Russian Catacomb Church, Fr. Lazarus (Zhurbenko), was secretly received into the West European diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) by Archbishop Anthony of Geneva and Western Europe (*ukaz* no. 648/818/2). Shortly after this, in 1982, another cleric of the West European diocese, Fr. Barnabas (Prokofiev), was secretly consecrated as Bishop of Cannes and sent to Moscow, where he consecrated Fr. Lazarus to the episcopate. The candidacy of Fr. Lazarus had been put forward by the dissident MP priest, Fr. Demetrius Dudko, with whom Archbishop Anthony had entered into correspondence.<sup>38</sup>

On August 1/14, 1990, the Chancellery of ROCOR decided to throw some light on this secret consecration by issuing the following statement: “In 1982 his Eminence Anthony, Archbishop of Geneva and Western Europe, together with his Eminence Mark, Bishop of Berlin and Germany, on the orders of the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, secretly performed an episcopal consecration on Hieromonk Barnabas (Prokofiev), so that through the cooperation of these archpastors the Church life of the Catacomb Orthodox Church in Russia might be regulated. Since external circumstances no longer compel either his Eminence Bishop Lazarus in Russia, or his Eminence Bishop Barnabas in France to remain as secret Hierarchs of our Russian Church Abroad, the Hierarchical Synod is now officially declaring this fact.”<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> This correspondence was published in the German Russian-language journal *Posev* (September, 1979, pp. 50-51) and was therefore well known to the KGB, who, it is argued, oversaw this whole process and “secret” consecration. Archbishop Anthony was the most liberal and pro-MP of the ROCA bishops at that time. His continued communion with ecumenists led to many communities in Western Europe leaving ROCOR, and to the break between ROCOR and the Matthewite Old Calendarists in 1976.

<sup>39</sup> “Zaiavlenie Arkhiereiskago Sinoda Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej”, *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 18 (1423), September 15/28, 1990, p. 6.

This was an ominous phrase: “so that... the Church life of the Catacomb Orthodox Church in Russia might be regulated”. No indication was given as to why the life of the Catacomb Church needed regulating from abroad, nor how it was proposed that this regulation should be accomplished (apart from the consecration of a hierarchy), nor whether the consent of the Catacomb Church to such a regulation had been sought or received, nor what canonical right ROCOR had to regulate the life of the Catacomb Church.<sup>40</sup>

In fact the consent of the Catacomb Church, was neither asked nor given.<sup>41</sup>

Be that as it may, ROCOR now had the beginnings of a secret hierarchy in the Soviet Union. This hierarchy began to act in the spring of 1990, when the first substantial signs of the collapse of Communism and a measure of ecclesiastical freedom were becoming evident. Thus Bishop Lazarus flew to New York, where his consecration was confirmed by the Synod of ROCOR; and believers throughout Russia became aware that ROCOR had entered into combat with the MP on Russian soil.

The first parish to leave the MP and officially join ROCOR was that of St. Constantine the Great in Suzdal, Vladimir province, whose pastor was Archimandrite Valentine (Rusantsov). As Fr. Valentine told the story: “In the Vladimir diocese I served as dean. I was a member of the diocesan administration, was for a time diocesan secretary and had responsibility for receiving guests in this diocese. And then I began to notice that I was being gradually, quietly removed. Perhaps this happened because I very much disliked prayers with people of other faiths. It’s one thing to drink tea with guests, and quite another.. to pray together with them, while the guests, it has to be said, were of all kinds: both Buddhists, and Muslims, and Satanists. I did not like these ecumenical prayers, and I did not hide this dislike of mine.

“And so at first they removed me from working with the guests, and then deprived me of the post of secretary, and then excluded me from the diocesan council. Once after my return from a trip abroad, the local hierarch Valentine (Mishchuk) summoned me and said: ‘Sit down and write a report for the

---

<sup>40</sup> In 1993 Bishop Lazarus’ clergy asked ROCOR: “We ask you to clearly answer the question: does ROCOR confess that the Catacomb Church is her sister, as she often did earlier, and if she does, then on what basis does ROCOR interfere in the inner affairs of the Catacomb Church?” (*Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, p. 134). A good question, but one which should also have been posed to Bishop Lazarus himself, since his own consecration was the first concrete “interference” of ROCOR in the life of the Catacomb Church, and he could have refused to have anything to do with it.

<sup>41</sup> Matushka Anastasia Shatilova writes: “The ordination papers (including the certificate) for Archim. Lazarus Zhurbenko were signed by: Metropolitan Philaret, Archbishop Vitaly, Archbishop Anthony of Geneva (though whom the appeal was sent) and Bishop Gregory as Secretary to the Synod. The fifth person to know of this case was I, because I typed all the documentation” (personal communication, September 19 / October 3, 2000).

whole year about what foreigners were with you, what you talked about with them, what questions they asked you and what answers you gave them.' 'Why is this necessary?' 'It's just necessary,' replied the bishop. 'I don't understand where I am, Vladyko – in the study of a hierarch or in the study of a KGB operative? No, I've never done this and never will do it. And remember that I am a priest and not a "stooge".' 'Well if you're not going to do it, I will transfer you to another parish.'

"And so the next day came the ukaz concerning my transfer to the out-of-the-way place Pokrov. I was upset, but after all I had to obey, it was a hierarch's ukaz. But suddenly something unexpected happened – my parishioners rebelled against this decision, people began to send letters to the representatives of the authorities expressing their dissatisfaction with my transfer: our parishioners even hired buses to go to the capital and protest.

"The patriarchate began to admonish them, suggested 'a good batyushka', Demetrius Nyetsvetayev, who was constantly on trips abroad, in exchange. 'We don't need your batyushka,' said the parishioners, 'we know this kind, today he'll spy on foreigners, tomorrow on the unbelievers of Suzdal, and then he'll begin to reveal the secret of parishioners' confessions.' In general, our parishioners just didn't accept Nyetsvetayev. They didn't even let him into the church. The whole town was aroused, and the parishioners came to me: 'Fr. Valentine, what shall we do?' At that point I told them that I had passed my childhood among the 'Tikhonites' [Catacomb Christians], and that there is a 'Tikhonite Church' existing in exile. If we write to their first-hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly, and he accepts us – will you agree to be under his omophorion? The church people declared their agreement. However, this attempt to remove me did not pass without a trace, I was in hospital as a result of an attack of nerves. And so, at the Annunciation, I receive the news that our parish had been received into ROCOR."<sup>42</sup>

On June 8/21, 1990, the feast of St. Theodore, the enlightener of Suzdal, the ROCOR hierarchs Mark of Berlin, Hilarion of Manhattan and Lazarus of Tambov celebrated the first hierarchical liturgy in the St. Constantine parish.<sup>43</sup> Then, in February, 1991 Archimandrite Valentine was consecrated as Bishop of Suzdal and Vladimir in Brussels by hierarchs of ROCOR. There now began a rapid growth in the number of parishes joining ROCOR on Russian soil, including many communities of the Catacomb Church. Most of these joined the Suzdal diocese under Bishop Valentine, but many also joined the Tambov diocese of Bishop Lazarus and the Kuban diocese of Bishop Benjamin. ROCOR inside Russia was now called the Free Russian Orthodox Church (FROC).

---

<sup>42</sup> "Vladyka Valentin raskazyvaet", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 17 (1446), September 1/14, 1991, pp. 9-10.

<sup>43</sup> Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky, "Torzhestva v Suzdale", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 15 (1420), August 1/14, 1990, p. 3.



## 2. First Signs of Division

Now where truth and Christian piety flourishes the devil is sure to interfere. And at this point he inspired certain hierarchs of ROCOR to hinder the work of the FROC hierarchs by a series of anti-canonical actions.

In 1991 the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR decided to organize church life in Russia on the principle of non-territoriality. As Archbishop Lazarus explained: "The Hierarchical Synod decreed equal rights for us three Russian hierarchs. If someone from the patriarchate wants to join Vladyka Valentine – please. If he wants to join Vladyka Benjamin or me – please. So far the division [of dioceses] is only conditional – more exactly, Russia is in the position of a missionary region. Each of us can receive parishes in any part of the country. For the time being it is difficult to define the boundaries of dioceses."<sup>44</sup>

This decision led to some conflicts between the FROC bishops, but not serious ones. However, it was a different matter when bishops from abroad began to interfere. As early as July, 1990 Archbishop Lazarus told the present writer that if Archbishop Mark of Germany continued to interfere in Russia he might be compelled to form an autonomous Church. And in the same month Archbishop Mark wrote a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly full of innuendos against Archimandrite Valentine. Nor did it stop there. He ordained a priest for St. Petersburg, a "Special German deanery" under the Monk Ambrose (von Sievers), who later founded his own Synod, and in general acted as if Russia were an extension of the German diocese.

In November, 1991 a correspondent of a church bulletin asked Bishop Valentine about Archbishop Mark's role. The reply was carefully weighed: "When the situation in Russia was still in an embryonic stage, Archbishop Mark with the agreement of the first-hierarchy of ROCOR made various attempts to build church life in Russia. One of Archbishop Mark's experiments was the 'special German deanery' headed by Fr. Ambrose (Sievers). *Now this is changing, insofar as the situation in the FROC has been sufficiently normalized. From now on not one hierarchy will interfere in Russian affairs* – except, it goes without saying, the three hierarchs of the FROC."<sup>45</sup>

In 1992, however, Archbishop Mark's interference not only did not cease, but became more intense, and was now directed particularly against the most successful and prominent of the FROC hierarchs, Bishop Valentine. Thus

---

<sup>44</sup> "Vladyka Lazar otvechaet na voprosy redaktsii", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 22 (1451), November 15.28, 1991, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> *Pruamoj Put'*, special issue; "Vladyka Valentin vernulsa iz Ameriki", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 3 (1456), February 1/14, 1992, p. 14. Italics mine (V.M.).

while calling for official negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate<sup>46</sup>, Mark called on believers in a publicly distributed letter “to distance yourselves from Bishop Valentine of the Suzdal and Vladimir diocese of the Free Russian Orthodox Church”, described the clergy in obedience to Bishop Valentine as “wolves in sheep’s clothing”, and told them to turn instead to Fr. Sergius Perekrestov (a priest who was later defrocked for adultery before leaving the FROC). A priest of the Moscow Patriarchate interpreted this letter to mean that ROCOR had “turned its back on the Suzdal diocese of the FROC”.<sup>47</sup>

In a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly dated December 25, 1992, Bishop Valentine complained that Archbishop Mark’s attacks against him had been distributed, not only to members of the Synod, but also to laypeople and even in churches of the Moscow Patriarchate. And he went on: “On the basis of the above positions I have the right to confirm that after my consecration to the episcopate his Eminence Vladyka Mark did everything to cause a quarrel between me and their Eminences Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin...

“It is interesting that when their Eminences Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin, by virtue of the Apostolic canons and their pastoral conscience, adopted, with me, a principled position on the question of his Eminence Archbishop Mark’s claims to administer Russian parishes, the latter simply dismissed the two hierarchs as being incapable of administration... Then Archbishop Mark began to accuse me of ‘lifting everything under myself like a bulldozer’. Therefore his Eminence Mark chose a different tactic. He wrote a letter to Kaliningrad, calling me ‘a wolf in sheep’s clothing’, and this letter was read out from the ambon in the churches of the Moscow patriarchate.

“Yesterday I was told that his Eminence Archbishop Mark sent a fax to the Synod insistently recommending that his Eminence Barnabas not be recalled from Moscow until a church trial had been carried out on Valentine. What trial, for what? For everything that I have done, for all my labours? Does not putting me on trial mean they want to put you, too, on trial? Does this not mean that it striking me with their fist they get at you with their elbow?”<sup>48</sup>

The reference to Bishop Barnabas is explained as follows. In February, 1992 he had been sent to Moscow as superior of the community of SS. Martha and Mary in Moscow, which was designated the Synodal podvorye. Then, on August 3, he organized “a conference of the clergy with the aim of organizing the Moscow diocesan organization of our Church. The conference was attended by more than ten clergy from Moscow and other parts of Russia. In his speech before the participants Vladyka pointed out the necessity of creating a diocesan administration which would unite all the parishes of the

---

<sup>46</sup> *Priamoj Put’*, January, 1992, p. 5; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 18, 1992.

<sup>47</sup> *Priamoj Put’*, January, 1992, pp. 3-4; *Priamoj Put’*, March, 1992, pp. 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, pp. 63-64.

FROC in Moscow and Moscow region, and also those parishes in other regions of Russia which wanted to unite with this diocesan administration.”<sup>49</sup> “At the diocesan conference... a diocesan council was elected, containing three members of the National Patriotic Front, Pamyat’, as representatives of the laity.”<sup>50</sup>

This was a double blow to the FROC. First, the appointment of a foreign bishop with almost unlimited powers in Russia was a direct affront to the attempts of the Russian bishops to prevent foreign interference in their dioceses. The encroachment of the foreign bishops on the canonical rights of the Russian bishops was becoming increasingly scandalous. (According to the holy canons (8<sup>th</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ecumenical Council, 9<sup>th</sup> of Antioch, 64<sup>th</sup> and 67<sup>th</sup> of Carthage) no bishop can encroach on the territory of another bishop or perform any sacramental action in it without his permission.) Secondly, Bishop Barnabas’ open endorsement of the fascist organization Pamyat’, which organized provocative demonstrations and even an attack on the offices of *Moskovskij Komsomolets*, scandalized church opinion both in Russia and outside.

On October 25 / November 7, 1992, Metropolitan Vitaly and the Synod of ROCOR acted to distance themselves from the activities of Bishop Barnabas, sending Bishop Hilarion and Fr. Victor Potapov to Moscow to express the official position of ROCOR at a press conference; which duly took place on November 13. However, in February, 1993, at a meeting of the Synod in New York, it was decided to reject this press-conference as “provocative” and to praise one of the pro-fascist priests, Fr. Alexis Averyanov, for his “fruitful work with Pamyat’”, bestowing on him an award for his “stand for righteousness”. Moreover, no action was taken against Bishop Barnabas, while Fr. Victor was forbidden to undertake any ecclesiastical or public activity in Russia.<sup>51</sup>

The year 1993 brought no relief for the beleaguered FROC bishops from their foreign brothers. Thus when the large and prosperous parish of the MP in Naginsk under its very popular pastor, Archimandrite Adrian, applied to come under the omophorion of Bishop Valentine, and was accepted by him on January 18, Bishop Barnabas interfered and suggested they come under *his omophorion* – which offer was politely but firmly turned down. At the same time the MP circulated an accusation - signed by a woman but with no other indication of time, place or names of witnesses of the supposed crime - that Archimandrite Adrian had raped one altar boy and had had improper

---

<sup>49</sup> *Pravoslavnaiia Rus’*, № 17 (1470), September 1/14, 1992, p. 12

<sup>50</sup> *Pravoslavnaiia Rus’*, № 18 (1471), September 15/28, 1992, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Sergius Bychkov, “Voskresenie mifa”, *Moskovskie Novosti*, March 7, 1993; “Ukazanie Protoiereu Viktoru Potapovu”, February 4/17, 1993 (№ 11/35/39). The official publications of ROCOR shed little light on this about-turn, saying only that the Synod “reviewed and changed certain of its decisions of December 12, 1992” (*Tserkovnaia Zhizn’*, №№ 1-2, January-February, 1993, p. 3).

relations with another. This accusation turned out to be completely fabricated – the “raped” altar boy wrote a letter of apology to Fr. Adrian and the letter was accepted by the prosecutor in the criminal court. Both youngsters were then sued for stealing icons...

In spite of this, Bishop Barnabas, without any kind of investigation or trial, suspended the archimandrite and wanted to depose Bishop Valentine for accepting such a pervert into his diocese. The Russian newspapers pointed out that Bishop Barnabas seemed to be partially supporting the patriarchate in the struggle for this parish – in which, as Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) pointed out, the KGB appeared also to be operating.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, several ROCOR bishops wanted to proceed with defrocking Bishop Valentine; but the decision was made to retire him instead on grounds of his ill-health – a completely uncanonical decision since neither had Bishop Valentine petitioned for his retirement nor had ROCOR bishops investigated his state of health.

But worse was to come. Bishop Barnabas wrote to Metropolitan Vladimir (Romanyuk) of the uncanonical Ukrainian Autocephalous Church seeking to enter into communion with him, and followed this up by visiting him in Kiev. The Moscow Patriarchate gleefully displayed this letter as proof of ROCOR's incompetence, and it was only with the greatest difficulty (and delay) that the Synod, spurred on by Fr. Victor and Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) outside Russia, and by Bishop Valentine inside Russia, began to extricate themselves from this scandal.

A recent publication summed up Bishop Barnabas' contribution to Russian Church life in this year: “In the shortest time [he] introduced the completest chaos<sup>53</sup> into the life of the Free Church, which was beginning to be reborn. This representative of the Synod began, above the heads of the Diocesan Bishops of the Free Church in Russia, and in violation of the basic canonical rules, to receive into his jurisdiction clerics who had been banned from serving by them, to carry out ordinations in their dioceses without their knowledge, and finally was not ashamed to demand, at the Council in 1993, that he should be given rights to administer *all the parishes of the Free Church in Russia!*<sup>54</sup> This request was not granted by the Council, the more so in that it learned that ‘the empowered representative of the Synod of the Russian Church Abroad in Moscow’, on writing-paper of the Hierarchical Synod, wrote a petition to ‘the Locum Tenens of the Kievan Patriarchal Throne’, Metropolitan Vladimir (Romanyuk), in which it said that ‘the traitrous Muscovite scribblers hired by the Moscow Patriarchate are trying to trample

---

<sup>52</sup> Emergency report to the ROCOR Synod, May 16/29, 1993, *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, p. 92. In a later report to the Synod (June 9/22, 1993, *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-10, 1994, pp. 94-95), Bishop Gregory, after enumerating Bishop Barnabas' transgressions, appealed that he be brought to trial.

<sup>53</sup> Bishop Valentine's phrase was: “such disturbance and division of the flock as the atheists and the MP could only dream about” (*Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, p. 5).

<sup>54</sup> *Protocol № 8*, April 30 / May 13, 1993.

into the mud the authority of the Russian Church Abroad. In this connection: we beseech you, Your Eminence, through the Kievan Patriarchate headed by you, to give our ecclesiastical activity a juridical base and receive us into brotherly communion.' Extraordinary as it may seem, the Council did not consider it necessary to defrock its representative, and it was put to him that he should set off for the Holy Land for a mere three months without right of serving – which, however, he did not carry out. This shameful letter was widely distributed by the Moscow Patriarchate, while the 'Patriarchal Locum Tenens', delighted by this prospect, invited the First-Hierarchy of the Church Abroad to visit Kiev in written form. This letter was also widely distributed."<sup>55</sup>

This was clear evidence, if further evidence were needed, that the interference of foreign bishops in the affairs of the Free Russian Orthodox Church had to be drastically curbed, and that the canonical rights of the FROC bishops to rule their own dioceses without interference from the "centre" (several thousand miles away from Russia!) had to be unequivocally strengthened and protected.

However, a letter dated October 2, 1992 from Archbishop Mark to Protopriest Michael Artsumovich of Meudon gave equally clear evidence, if further evidence was needed, that this ROCOR hierarch at any rate neither intended to protect the rights of the Russian bishops nor in any way respected either them or their flock: "We are receiving [from the MP] by no means the best representatives of the Russian Church. Basically, these are people who know little or nothing about the Church Abroad. And in those cases in which someone possesses some information, it must be doubtful that he is in general in a condition to understand it in view of his own mendacity and the mendacity of his own situation. In receiving priests from the Patriarchate, we receive with them a whole series of inadequacies and vices of the MP itself... The real Catacomb Church no longer exists. It in fact disappeared in the 1940s or the beginning of the 1950s... Only individual people have been preserved from it, and in essence everything that has arisen since is only pitiful reflections, and people take their desires for reality. Those who poured into this stream in the 1950s and later were themselves infected with Soviet falsehood, and they partly – and involuntarily – participate in it themselves, that is, they enter the category of what we call 'homo sovieticus'... In Russia, consequently, there cannot be a Russian Church because it is all based on Soviet man... I think it is more expedient to seek allies for ourselves among those elements that are pure or striving for canonical purity both in the depths of the Moscow Patriarchate and in the other Local Churches – especially in Serbia or even Greece... We will yet be able to deliver ourselves from that *impurity* which we have now received from the Moscow Patriarchate, and again start on the path of pure Orthodoxy... It is evident

---

<sup>55</sup> *Istoki Rossijskoj Pravoslavnoj Svobodnoj Tserkvi*, Suzdal, 1997, pp. 19-20.

that we must... try and undertake the *russification* of Soviet man and the Soviet church..."<sup>56</sup>

Archbishop Mark gave himself away in this shocking and insulting letter: disdain for the "pitiful" and supposedly long-dead Catacomb Church, disgust with the "impure", "Soviet" Free Russian Church, admiration for the "purity" of the apostate churches of "World Orthodoxy" with their Masonic and KGB-agent "hierarchs". As for the remark – by an ethnic German – about the "russification" of the Russian Church, the reaction in the heart of Holy Russia was one of understandable dismay...

### 3. The First Separation

Archbishop Mark wanted to rid himself of the "impurity" of the Free Russian Church; he was soon to achieve his aim. On April 14/27, 1993 Archbishop Lazarus sent an "explanatory report" to the Synod detailed the many serious canonical violations committed against the Russian bishops, and in particular against himself, to which the leadership of ROCOR had not reacted in spite of many appeals. He then declared his "temporary administrative separation" from the Synod until the Synod restored canonical order. But, he insisted, he was not breaking communion with ROCOR. As a result of this, without consulting either him or his diocese, the ROCOR meeting in Cleveland, Ohio retired him, and the administration of his parishes was transferred to Metropolitan Vitaly.

In May, during its Council in Lesna, the Synod effectively retired Bishop Valentine also – it goes without saying, against his will and without canonical justification. As Metropolitan Vitaly wrote to him: "The Hierarchical Council has become acquainted with your administrative successes. However, your health in such a difficult situation makes it necessary for us to retire you because of illness until your full recovery. This means that if you are physically able, you can serve, since you are in now way banned from church serving, but you are simply freed from administrative cares".

At this point the first signs of serious dissent with ROCOR's politics in Russia in the ranks of ROCOR's episcopate appeared in the person of Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), the foremost canonist of ROCOR and a man of enormous experience in church matters, having been at the very heart of ROCOR's administration from 1931 until his forced retirement by Metropolitan Vitaly in 1986. In an emergency report to the Synod dated May 16/29, after sharply criticizing the unjust and uncanonical actions of the Synod, he said: "Our responsibility before God demands from us the annulment of this conciliar resolution, and if there are accusers who have material which has not yet been shown us in documentary form, then Bishop Valentine must be returned to his see and the affair must be either cut short or again reviewed by the

---

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, pp. 108, 109.

Council, but now in agreement with the canons that we have in the Church. For this would clearly be necessary to convene a Council, and for a start a judgement must be made about it in the Synod...

“As a consequence of this Archbishop Lazarus has already left us. And Bishop Valentine’s patience is already being tried. If he, too, will not bear the temptation, what will we be left with? Will his flock in such a situation want to leave with him? Will not it also rebel?

“For clarity’s sake I must begin with an examination of certain matters brought up at the expanded session of the Synod which took place in Munich.

“A certain tension was noticeable there in spite of the external calmness. It turned out that behind the scenes a suspicious attitude towards Bishop Valentine had arisen. Already after the closing of the Synod I learned that several members of the Synod had been shown a document containing accusations of transgressions of the laws of morality against Bishop Valentine. The President of the Synod did not have this document during the sessions but only at the end. It was then that I, too, received a copy of the denunciation from Archbishop Mark, who was given it by Bishop Barnabas, who evidently did not know how to deal with such objects according to the Church canons. I involuntarily ascribed the unexpected appearance of such a document amidst the members of the Synod to the action of some communist secret agents and to the inexperience of Bishop Barnabas in such matters.

“The caution of the Church authorities in relation to similar accusations in the time of troubles after the persecutions was ascribed to the 74<sup>th</sup> Apostolic canon, the 2<sup>nd</sup> canon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Council and especially to the 6<sup>th</sup> canon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ecumenical Council. At that time the heretics were multiplying their intrigues against the Orthodox hierarchs. The above-mentioned canons indicate that accusations hurled by less than two or three witnesses – who were, besides, faithful children of the Church and accusers worthy of trust – were in no way to be accepted...

“Did they apply such justice and caution when they judged Bishop Valentine, and were ready without any investigation to ... defrock him for receiving Archimandrite Adrian? And were the accusations hurled at the latter really seriously examined?

“Beginning with the processing, contrary to the canons, of the accusations against Bishop Valentine on the basis of the single complaint of a person known to none of us<sup>57</sup>, the Sobor was already planning to defrock him

---

<sup>57</sup> Bishop Valentine’s accuser turned out to be Alexander R. Shtilmark, an assistant of the Pamyat leader, Demetrius Vasilyev. His motivation was clear. Later, several of Shtilmark’s relatives witnessed to his mental unbalance. In spite of this, and Bishop Valentine’s repeated protests of his innocence (which appear not to have reached Metropolitan Vitaly) ROCOR, in

without any kind of due process, until the argument of his illness turned up. But here, too, they failed to consider that this required his own petition and a check to ascertain the seriousness of his illness. The intention was very simple: just get rid of a too active Bishop. They didn't think of the fate of his parishes, which exist on his registration. Without him they would lose it.

"While we, in the absence of the accused and, contrary to the canons, without his knowledge, were deciding the fate of the Suzdal diocese, Vladyka Valentine received three more parishes. Now he has 63. Taking into account Archimandrite Adrian with his almost 10,000 people, we are talking about approximately *twenty thousand souls*.

"The question arises: in whose interests is it to destroy what the papers there call the centre of the Church Abroad in Russia?

"The success of Bishop Valentine's mission has brought thousands of those being saved into our Church, but now this flock is condemned to widowhood and the temptation of having no head only because he turned out not to be suitable to some of our Bishops..."<sup>58</sup>

It was in this highly charged atmosphere, with their bishop forcibly and uncanonically retired and the registration of all their parishes hanging by a thread, that the annual diocesan conference of the Suzdal diocese took place from June 9/22 to 11/24. It was also attended by priests representing Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin. Hieromonk Agathangelus read out a letter from Archbishop Lazarus in which he declared that although he had considered the actions of ROCOR in Russia to be uncanonical, he had tolerated them out of brotherly love, but was now forced to speak out against them, for they were inflicting harm on the Church. First, ROCOR did not have the right to form its own parishes in Russia insofar as the Catacomb Church, which had preserved the succession of grace of the Mother Church, continued to exist on her territory. Therefore it was necessary only to strengthen the catacomb communities and expand them through an influx of new believers. Secondly, the hierarchs of ROCOR had been acting in a spirit far from brotherly love, for they had been treating their brothers, the hierarchs of the FROC, as second-class Vladykas: they received clergy who had been banned by the Russian Vladykas, brought clergy of other dioceses to trial, removed bans placed by the Russian hierarchs without their knowledge or agreement, and annulled other decisions of theirs (for example, Metropolitan Vitaly forbade an inspection to be carried out in the parish of Fr. Sergius Perekrestov of St. Petersburg). Thirdly, the ROCOR hierarchs were far from Russia and did not understand the situation, so they could not rightly administer the

---

the persons of Archbishop Mark and Bishop Hilarion continued to drag this matter out for another two years (Reports of Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, pp. 123, 126).

<sup>58</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, pp. 89-90.



Russian parishes. Thus the Synod removed the title 'Administering the affairs of the FROC' from all the hierarchs except Bishop Barnabas, which forced the dioceses to re-register with the authorities - although, while a new registration was being carried out, the parishes could lose their right to ownership of the churches and other property. Moreover re-registration was almost impossible, insofar as it required the agreement of an expert consultative committee attached to the Supreme Soviet, which contained hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate. Fourthly, the ROCOR hierarchs had been inconsistent in their actions, which aroused the suspicion that their actions were directed, not by the Holy Spirit, but by forces foreign to the Church.<sup>59</sup> Archbishop Lazarus concluded by calling for the formation of a True Orthodox Catacomb Church that was administratively separate from, but in communion with, ROCOR, on the basis of Patriarch Tikhon's ukaz № 362, which had never been annulled.

At the end of the conference it was decided that the Suzdal diocese would follow Archbishop Lazarus' example in separating administratively from ROCOR while retaining communion in prayer with it. Bishop Valentine expressed the hope that this would be only a temporary measure, and he called on Metropolitan Vitaly to convene an extraordinary Council to remove the anticanonical resolutions of the Council in Lesna and the Synod meeting in Cleveland...<sup>60</sup>

A meeting of the clergy Archbishop Lazarus' diocese in Odessa on July 4/17 confirmed that their separation from ROCOR was conditional, "on the verge of a break". They reiterated their belief that the bans on Archbishop Lazarus were uncanonical and called on the hierarchs of ROCOR to review them in a spirit of brotherly love and mutual understanding".

Some FROC priests - notably Protopriest Lev Lebedev of Kursk - while fully agreeing that the ROCOR bishops had committed uncanonical acts on Russian soil, nevertheless began to express the view that the actions of the FROC bishops had been hasty and were justified only in the case that ROCOR had fallen away from Orthodoxy, which, as everyone agreed, had not yet taken place. However, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) adopted a quite different position. He pointed out that the claims of ROCOR to *rule* as opposed to *help* the Church in Russia contradicted ROCOR's own fundamental Statute:-

---

<sup>59</sup> There were objective grounds for such a suspicion. Thus the protocols of this Council for June 9/22 record: "Hieromonk Vladimir, superior of the Borisovsk church, says that three months before the Session of the Hierarchical Council, his relative said that he should abandon the Suzdal Diocese since they were going to retire Bishop Valentine at the Session of the Sobor in France. She knew this from a party worker linked with the KGB. And three years later he learned that this question had indeed been discussed. He is interested to know how it happened that the GB realized its intention in real life?" (*Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 23, 1995, p. 54; letter to the author by Hieromonk Vladimir (Ovchinnikov) of June 23 / July 6, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, p. 121; letter to the author by Hieromonk Vladimir, op. cit.

“For decades we living abroad have commemorated ‘the Orthodox Episcopate of the Persecuted Church of Russia’. But in our last Sobor we removed from the litanies and the prayer for the salvation of Russia the word ‘persecuted’, witnessing thereby that we already officially consider that the persecutions on the Russian Church have ceased.

“And indeed, our parishes in Russia are now harried in places, but basically they have complete freedom of action, in particular if they do not lay claim to receive any old church, which the Moscow Patriarchate then tries to snatch. However it does not always succeed in this. Thus the huge Theophany cathedral in Noginsk (with all the buildings attached to it) according to the court’s decision remain with our diocese...

“In other words, we can say that if there is willingness on our side we now have every opportunity of setting in order the complete regeneration of the Russian Orthodox Church in our Fatherland.

“The very first paragraph of the ‘Statute on the Russian Church Abroad’ says:

“‘The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is an *indivisible part of the Russian Local Church temporarily self-governing on conciliar principles until the removal of the atheist power* in Russia in accordance with the resolution of the holy Patriarch Tikhon, the Holy Synod and the Higher Ecclesiastical Council of the Russian Church of November 7/20, 1920 № 362 (emphasis mine, B. G.).

“If we now lead the Russian Hierarchy to want to break their administrative links with the Church Abroad, then will not our flock abroad finally ask us: what ‘Episcopate of the Russian Church’ are we still praying for in our churches? But if we took these words out of the litanies, then we would only be officially declaring that we are no longer a part of the Russian Church.

“Will we not then enter upon a very dubious canonical path of autonomous existence, but now without a Patriarchal blessing and outside the Russian Church, a part of which we have always confessed ourselves to be? Will not such a step lead us to a condition of schism in the Church Abroad itself, and, God forbid, to the danger of becoming a sect?..

“It is necessary for us to pay very careful attention to and get to know the mood revealed in our clergy in the Suzdal diocese, so as on our part to evaluate the mood in which our decisions about the Church in Russia could be received by them.

“But will we not see then that it is one thing when the Church Abroad *gives help* to the Russian Church through the restoration in it of a canonical

hierarchy, but something else entirely *when we lay claims to rule the WHOLE of Russia from abroad, which was in no way envisaged by even one paragraph of the 'Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad', nor by one of our later resolutions?*"<sup>61</sup>

On October 20 / November 2 (i.e. over eighteen months since the scandals erupted), the Synod decided to withdraw Bishop Barnabas from Russia and to place all his parishes in the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly (who, throughout the 1990s, has not set foot once on Russian soil, in spite of numerous invitations).<sup>62</sup> All the parishes of ROCOR in Siberia, Ukraine and Belarus were to be entrusted to Bishop Benjamin.<sup>63</sup>

By the beginning of 1994 the Russian bishops had received no reaction whatsoever from the Synod to any of their letters and requests. On March 8/21, 1994, in a conference taking place in Suzdal, Bishop Valentine said: "On June 10/23, 1993 in Suzdal there took place a diocesan congress in which resolutions were taken and an Address was sent to the Synod indicating the transgressions, by the above-mentioned Hierarchs, of the Apostolic Canons and decrees of the Fathers of the Church, of the Ecumenical and Local Councils. At the same time they asked that his Grace Bishop Barnabas be recalled, and that Archbishop Mark should ask forgiveness of the clergy and the Russian people for his humiliation of their honour and dignity. If our request were ignored, the whole weight of responsibility would lie on the transgressors of the Church canons. But so far there has been no reply.

"We sent the Resolution of the clergy, monastics and laypeople warning that if there continued to be transgressions of the Apostolic Canons and Conciliar Resolutions on the part of the Hierarchs, with the connivance of the Hierarchical Synod, the whole responsibility would lie as a heavy burden on the transgressors. The Synod *did not reply*.

"Together with his Eminence Archbishop Lazarus and the members of the Diocesan Councils I sent an address to the Synod in which their attention was drawn to the wily intrigues on the part of those who wished us ill, and asked that the situation be somehow corrected, placing our hopes on Christian love and unity of mind, which help to overcome human infirmities. But in the same address we laid out in very clear fashion our determination that if the Hierarchical Synod did not put an end to the deliberate transgressions, we would be forced to exist independently, in accordance with the holy Patriarch Tikhon's ukaz № 362 of November 7/20, 1920, in the interests of the purity of Orthodoxy and the salvation of our Russian flock. The reply consisted in Vladyka Metropolitan threatening a ban.

---

<sup>61</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, pp. 128-129, 130.

<sup>62</sup> Later, on June 26 / July 8, 1994, Bishop Barnabas was forbidden from travelling to Russia for five years (*Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, №№ 3-4, May-August, 1994, p. 5).

<sup>63</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, №№ 5-6, September-December, 1993, pp. 7, 9.

"I sent a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly in which I besought him earnestly to confirm my status before the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, so that the Suzdal Diocesan Administration should not lose its registration. This time the reply was swift, only not to the Diocesan Administration, but to the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation under the signature of Bishop Barnabas, saying that the Russian Hierarchs were no longer Administering the affairs of the FROC, and that this duty was laid upon him. As a result I and the member of my Diocesan Council began visiting office after office, a process that lasted many months.

"It is difficult for you to imagine how much labour we had to expend, how many written bureaucratic demands we had to fulfil, in order to get our Regulations re-registered. If I had not undertaken this, all the churches would automatically have been taken out of registration and then, believe me, the Moscow Patriarchate would not have let go such a 'juicy morsel'." <sup>64</sup>

After hearing more speeches in the same vein, including one from Archbishop Lazarus, the Congress made the following decisions: 1. To form a Temporary Higher Church Administration (THCA) of the Russian Orthodox Church, which, without claiming to be the highest Church authority in Russia, would have as its final aim the convening of a Free All-Russian Local Council that would have such authority. 2. To elect and consecrate new bishops. 3. To declare their gratitude to ROCOR and Metropolitan Vitaly, whose name would continue to be commemorated in Divine services, since they wished to remain in communion of prayer with them. 4. To express the hope that the Hierarchical Synod would recognize the THCA and the consecrations performed by it.

One of the members of the Congress, Elena Fateyevna Shipunova, declared: "It is now completely obvious that the subjection of the Russian dioceses to the Synod Abroad contradicts the second point of Ukaz № 362. The Russian Church is faced directly with the necessity of moving to independent administration in accordance with this Ukaz. After the sergianist schism Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan called for such a move, considering Ukaz № 362 as the only possible basis of Church organization. Incidentally, Metropolitan Cyril also indicated to Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky that he had to follow Ukaz № 362 instead of usurping ecclesiastical power. Metropolitan Cyril and the other bishop-confessors tried to organize the administration of the Russian Church on the basis of this Ukaz, but they couldn't do this openly. Now for the first time the Russian Church has the opportunity to do this. We could say that this is an historical moment. The Temporary Higher Church Administration that has been created is the first legal one in Russia since the time of the sergianist schism. The Centre of Church power ceased its existence after the death of Metropolitan Peter more than half a century ago,

---

<sup>64</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, pp. 159-160.

but we have not yet arrived at the Second All-Russian Council which has the power to re-establish Central Church power.”<sup>65</sup>

On March 9/22 the THCA, which now contained three new bishops: Theodore of Borisovsk, Seraphim of Sukhumi and Agathangelus of Simferopol, together with many clergy, monastics and laity, informed Metropolitan Vitaly and the Synod of ROCOR of their decision.

On March 23 / April 5 the Synod of ROCOR rejected this declaration and the new consecrations, and decided to break communion in prayer with the newly formed Autonomous Church, but without imposing any bans.<sup>66</sup> In this decision the ROCOR Synod called itself the “Central Church authority” of the Russian Church, which contradicted both its own Fundamental Statute and the simple historical fact that, as the FROC bishops pointed out, since the death of Metropolitan Peter in 1937 the Russian Church has had no “Central Church authority”.<sup>67</sup> Then, in order to strengthen ROCOR’s hand in the coming struggle with the FROC, Archimandrite Eutyches (Kurochkin) was consecrated Bishop of Ishim and Siberia on July 11/24.<sup>68</sup>

Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), however, who had not been admitted to the sessions of the ROCOR Synod, fully approved of the actions of the Russian Hierarchs in a letter to Bishop Valentine dated March 24 / April 6. And on the same day he wrote the following to Metropolitan Vitaly: “We have brought the goal of the possible regeneration of the Church in Russia to the most undesirable possible end. Tormented by envy and malice, certain of our bishops have influenced the whole course of our church politics in Russia. As a consequence of this, our Synod has not understood the meaning of the mission of our existence abroad.

“As I warned the Synod in my last report, we have done absolutely everything possible to force the Russian bishops to separate from us administratively. They have had to proceed from Resolution № 362 of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20, 1920 in order to avoid the final destruction of the just-begun regeneration of our Church in our Fatherland. But our Synod, having nothing before its eyes except punitive tactics, proceeds only on the basis of a normalized church life. Whereas the Patriarch’s Resolution had in mind the preservation of the Church’s structure in completely unprecedented historical and ecclesiastical circumstances.

“The ukaz was composed for various cases, including means for the re-establishment of the Church’s Administration even in conditions of its

---

<sup>65</sup> *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, pp. 168-169.

<sup>66</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn’*, №№ 1-2, January-April, 1994, pp. 14-16; *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, №№ 18-20, 1994, pp. 196-198.

<sup>67</sup> *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, NN 18-20, 1994, pp. 198, 200-201.

<sup>68</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn’*, NN 3-4, May-August, 1994, pp. 60-65.

abolition (see article 9) and 'the extreme disorganization of Church life'. This task is placed before every surviving hierarchy, on condition that he is truly Orthodox.

"The Russian Hierarchs felt themselves to be in this position when, for two years running, their inquiries and requests to provide support against the oppression of the Moscow Patriarchate were met with complete silence on the part of our Synod.

"Seeing the canonical chaos produced in their dioceses by Bishop Barnabas, and the Synod's silent collusion with him, the Russian Hierarchs came to the conclusion that there was no other way of avoiding the complete destruction of the whole enterprise but their being led by the Patriarch's Resolution no. 362.

"Our Synod unlawfully retired Bishop Valentine for his reception of a huge parish in Noginsk,... but did not react to the fact that Bishop Barnabas had in a treacherous manner disgraced the Synod, in whose name he petitioned to be received into communion with the Ukrainian self-consecrators!

"I don't know whether the full text of Resolution № 362 has been read at the Synod. I myself formerly paid little attention to it, but now, having read it, I see that the Russian Hierarchs have every right to cite it, and this fact will come to the surface in the polemic that will inevitably take place now. I fear that by its decisions the Synod has already opened the path to this undesirable polemic, and it threatens to create a schism not only in Russia, but also with us here...

"There are things which it is impossible to stop, and it is also impossible to escape the accomplished fact. If our Synod does not now correctly evaluate the historical moment that has taken place, then its already profoundly undermined prestige (especially in Russia) will be finally and ingloriously destroyed.

"All the years of the existence of the Church Abroad we have enjoyed respect for nothing else than our uncompromising faithfulness to the canons. They hated us, but they did not dare not to respect us. But now we have shown the whole Orthodox world that the canons are for us an empty sound, and we have become a laughing-stock in the eyes of all those who have even the least relationship to Church affairs.

"You yourself, at the Synod in Lesna, allowed yourself to say that for us, the participants in it, it was now not the time to examine the canons, but we had to act quickly. You, who are at the helm of the ship of the Church, triumphantly, before the whole Sobor, declared to us that we should now hasten to sail without a rudder and without sails. At that time your words

greatly disturbed me, but I, knowing your irritability with me for insisting on the necessity of living according to the canons, nevertheless hoped that all was not lost yet and that our Bishops would somehow shake off the whole of this nightmare of recent years.

“Think, Vladyko, of the tens of thousands of Orthodox people both abroad and in Russia who have been deceived by us. Do not calm yourself with the thought that if guilt lies somewhere, then it lies equally on all of our hierarchs. The main guilt will lie on you as the leader of our Sobor...”<sup>69</sup>

#### 4. The Second Separation.

In spite of receiving no reply to their repeated requests that the ROCOR Synod re-establish canonical order in Russia, Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine accepted an invitation from Abbess Macrina of Lesna monastery – not, significantly, from the Synod or any individual hierarch – to go to the Lesna Sobor of ROCOR in November, 1994. Here, on November 10/23, in spite of a very cold reception, – “both of us,” as Bishop Valentine later wrote, “were in fact isolated from the Hierarchical Sobor and its acts” – they asked forgiveness and were again received into communion, according to the official minutes of ROCOR.<sup>70</sup> It should be noted, however, that in the “Act” later signed by all the bishops but *not* published in the official minutes, the forgiveness was asked from *both* sides.

On the same day the Sobor resolved: “1. The Council of Bishops considers the normalization of interrelations with the Most Reverend Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine to be possible on the condition that the THCA be abolished without measures of interdiction against its organizers. 2. It is possible to recognize the three hierarchical ordinations performed by Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine as lawful if, permeated by a feeling of repentance and humility, the newly-ordained hierarchs will renounce the text previously signed by them and will take an oath in accordance with the text established by our higher ecclesiastical authority, which will be issued to them from the Chancery of the Synod of Bishops. 3. The Most Reverend Russian [hierarchs] are responsible for organizing a hierarchical conference to make decisions on local questions. Moreover, one of the Most Reverend Russian [hierarchs] [this was later decreed to be Archbishop Lazarus] will be a member of the Synod of Bishops.”<sup>71</sup>

None of the outstanding issues dividing the two sides were discussed at that time, but the Russian bishops did manage to ask Bishop Hilarion for

---

<sup>69</sup> Bishop Gregory, *Pis'ma*, Moscow, 1998, pp. 123-125; *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 23, 1995, pp. 21-23.

<sup>70</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, №№ 5-6, September-December, 1994, p. 13; *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XVI, № 4, July-August, 1994, p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XVI, no. 4, July-August, 1994, pp. 9-10.

explanations of two things that worried them: ROCOR's entering into communion with the Greek Old Calendarist Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili (which Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) had strongly protested against), and its forthcoming negotiations (at Archbishop Mark's insistence) with members of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Then they were invited to join the Sobor. However, as they crossed the threshold of the monastery church where the Sobor was in session, the Russian bishops were handed an "Act" – Bishop Valentine later called it an "Act of capitulation" – which had already been signed by all the ROCOR bishops and which the two Russian bishops were now told to sign.<sup>72</sup> "When we had cursorily looked through this Act," writes Bishop Valentine, "I began to protest, to which Archbishop Mark said that if we didn't want peace and did not want to sign, we could leave the hall." Vladyka Valentine said that both sides had to participate in drawing up such an act, after which Bishop Hilarion, deputy secretary of the Synod, promised "that they would edit the act, taking into account our remarks and suggestions". Then Archbishop Lazarus agreed to sign. Bishop Valentine, though unwilling to sign, did not want to create a schism from Archbishop Lazarus. So he, too, signed. Two hours later, overcome by the extreme tension of the occasion, Bishop Valentine suffered a heart attack and was rushed to a hospital in Paris, where he was placed in intensive care.

While Vladyka Valentine was still in hospital and in a very weak condition, two ROCOR bishops came to him, gave him communion and asked him to sign two more documents (he does not remember what was in those documents). On returning to Lesna, Vladyka offered a second variant of the Act to Vladyka Lazarus. Lazarus did not want to sign this second variant, but he suggested to Vladyka Valentine that he sign in the capacity of his deputy. So Valentine signed his own variant of the Act and gave copies of it to both Vladyka Lazarus and the ROCOR Synod.<sup>73</sup> Bishop Eutyches later witnessed that Bishop Valentine's proposed changes to the original Act were not accepted by the other bishops at the Sobor.<sup>74</sup>

It is not known precisely on which day these events took place. However, we do know that on November 17/30 it was resolved: "1. To survey all the Most Reverend members of the Council after receipt by the Synodal Chancery

---

<sup>72</sup> A severely truncated version of this "Act" was published in *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'* (№№ 5-6, September-December, 1994, pp. 13-14), but the whole "Act" has never, to the present author's knowledge, been published in the ROCOR press, in spite of the decision to do so "in all organs of the church press" (point 9 of the "Act", see below). In fact, Bishop Valentine reported that the ROCOR chancellery had told him that the Act would not be published (*Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 22, 1995, p. 12).

<sup>73</sup> This account is based on Archbishop Valentine's own words to the present writer, together with his letter to the Suzdal Council dated January 11/24, 1995 (*Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 22, 1995, pp. 6-10).

<sup>74</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 22, 1995, p. 12.



of all data on the bishops ordained in Russia: Theodore, Seraphim and Agathangel. 2. To invite these three bishops to the city of Munich (if possible, for the altar feast of the Holy New-martyrs), for carrying out the nomination and confession of faith and concelebrations with the Most Reverend members of the Council. 3. To approve the proposed borders of the Russian dioceses.”<sup>75</sup>

This latter decision, which involved the division of the parishes of ROCOR-FROC in Russia into six dioceses with newly-defined boundaries was to elicit, as we shall see, was to elicit serious discontent among the Russian clergy because of the threat it posed to the registration of their churches. Bishop Valentine did not sign it – probably because he was already in hospital.

On the same day, still more seriously, the Synod published an epistle declaring that “the time has come to seek living communion with all the parts of the One Russian Orthodox Church, scattered by dint of historical circumstances”. This serious compromise in the confessing stance of ROCOR vis-à-vis the Moscow Patriarchate, with which it quite clearly said that it wanted “better relations”<sup>76</sup>, was signed by Archbishop Lazarus – but, again, not by Bishop Valentine. It was later to be used by Archbishop Mark as an excuse for his treacherous relations with the patriarchate.

The next day, in two special *ukazes*, ROCOR confirmed Bishop Valentine as ruling hierarch of the Suzdal diocese and recognized that the accusations of immorality which had been hurled at him two years before, and which Archbishop Mark had insisted on bringing before the Synod, although the canons forbade it, were completely unfounded.<sup>77</sup>

On November 22 / December 5, having returned from hospital in Paris to the Lesna monastery, Bishop Valentine wrote a letter to the Sobor once again explaining the serious problems caused to the FROC by the canonical transgressions of ROCOR. And he appealed to the ROCOR bishops to relate to the FROC bishops in the same way that the famous ROCOR theologian Archbishop Averky had once (in 1971) recommended that they relate to the Old Calendarist Greeks: “Our interference must be limited to giving the Greeks grace-filled bishops, and then we must leave them to live independently.”<sup>78</sup> It was evident that, in spite of the restoration of communion with ROCOR, Vladyka was still deeply worried by the intentions of ROCOR with regard to the Russian dioceses – a fear that was to prove to be more than justified...

---

<sup>75</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, №№5-6, September-December, 1994, p. 16; *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 21, 1995, pp. 44-46; *Living Orthodoxy*, vol. XVI, № 4, July-August, 1994, p. 10.

<sup>76</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, №№ 5-6, September-December, 1994, p. 10; *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 21, 1995, p. 49.

<sup>77</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 21, 1995, pp. 42, 43.

<sup>78</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 21, 1995, p. 32.

On January 12/25, 1995 there was a meeting of the bishops and clergy of the FROC in Suzdal to discuss the results of the Lesna Sobor. Besides the Act, of particular concern to many of the clergy was the fact that the redefining of the diocesan boundaries proposed at the Sobor would involve the necessity of re-registration for very many parishes. Since they had achieved registration only with the greatest difficulty in the first place, they did not of course welcome this prospect. But more importantly, it would very probably mean that they would be refused any registration, since the Moscow Patriarchate representatives would insist that changing names and diocesan boundaries was unacceptable. This in turn would very likely mean that their churches would be handed over to the patriarchate.

Thus the Moscow Protopriest Michael Ardov said: "Concerning the church building which I occupy, I must say that if I transfer to Vladyka Eutyches [to whom ROCOR had given the Moscow and St. Petersburg dioceses], what will happen? The building is registered with the Suzdal diocese. They tell us that we are in this building unlawfully, and that we still have to secure its transfer to us. It is well known that [Moscow Mayor] Luzhkov is categorically against our parish. They forced us to change our parish rules sixteen times before registering it. Of course, I submit to the Ukaz of the Hierarchical Synod, but I have a request for our bishops: they must take into account that this is not Canada and not America, but a different state, and we have different perspectives."<sup>79</sup>

Several other priests spoke against re-registration for similar reasons.

Towards the end of the meeting, Protopriest Andrew Osetrov posed the following question to Bishop Eutyches: "Which do you consider preferable for Russian believers – the Resolutions of the Hierarchical Synod and Sobor of ROCOR and its First-Hierarchy, or the Resolutions of the All-Russian Sobor of 1917-18 and the holy Patriarch Tikhon?" Bishop Eutyches replied: "Preferable are the Resolutions of living hierarchs, and not dead ones. Even if the Resolutions of the Synod of ROCOR will be uncanonical, for me this has no significance, I must fulfil them."<sup>80</sup>

This summed up the difference between the two sides. For ROCOR (and the Russian Bishops Benjamin and Eutyches) obedience to the Synod was the ultimate value, more important even than the holy canons which every bishop swears to uphold at his consecration. For the FROC bishops, on the other hand, the authority of ROCOR could not be placed higher than the objective good of their own flock, which could be preserved only by faithfulness to the canons of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the highest authorities in the post-revolutionary Russian Church – the decisions of Patriarch Tikhon and the 1917-18 Council.

---

<sup>79</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 22, 1995, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 22, 1995, pp. 15-16.

The next day, January 13/26, the seven FROC bishops met and decided to put off a final decision on the thorny question of the territorial division of dioceses. When discussion passed to the Act, Bishop Eutyches said that the Act had not been fulfilled by the Russian bishops and refused to take any further part in the Conference. Later, in a letter to Metropolitan Vitaly dated January 17/30, he wrote that "Bishop Benjamin, convinced that the meeting completely supported Bishop Valentine and was hostile to the Church Abroad and himself personally, left the meeting [on January 12/25]. I participated in the meeting to the end and was struck by the general anti-ROCOR mood of the hierarchs, priests, nuns and laymen."<sup>81</sup>

On January 14/27 the Hierarchical Conference (excluding Bishops Eutyches and Benjamin) approved a letter to the ROCOR Synod, in which they wrote that the Act approved by the Lesna Sobor "was in extreme need of a series of substantial changes to the points, and additions". Below we quote the Act, together with the comments of the FROC bishops (in italics):

"We, the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCOR, under the presidency of the First-Hierarchy, His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly of Eastern America and New York, and the Most Reverend Hierarchs: Archbishop Lazarus of Odessa and Tambov and Bishop Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir, taking upon ourselves full responsibility before God and the All-Russian flock, and following the commandments of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, in the name of peace and love, for the sake of the salvation of our souls and the souls of our flock, declare the following:

'1. We recognize our mutual responsibility for the disturbances that have arisen in the Russian [Rossijskoj] Church, but we consider that certain hasty actions of the Hierarchical Synod cannot serve as justification for a schism in the Russian Church and the establishment of the Temporary Higher Church Administration.'

*Comment by the FROC bishops: We definitely do not agree with the definition of the actions of the Russian hierarchs as a schism, for these actions were a forced measure aimed at guarding the canonical rights of the Bishop in his diocese, and the created Temporary Higher Church Administration was formed, not in spite of, but in accordance with the will and ukaz № 362 of the holy Patriarch Tikhon, at a time when the Hierarchical Synod of the ROCOR left the Russian hierarchs without any communications, directives, holy Antimins or holy Chrismation.*

*If we recognize our mutual responsibility for the disturbances that have arisen in the Russian Church, then it is our right to recognize certain hasty actions of the Hierarchical Sobor and Synod as uncanonical and as inflicting direct harm on the work of restoring true Orthodoxy in Russia, which has served as the terminus a quo for [our] conditional administrative separation and the formation of the Temporary Higher Church Administration.*

---

<sup>81</sup> Suzdal'skij Palomnik, № 23, 1995, p. 15.

*The concrete intra-ecclesiastical situation has dictated such a course of action on our part, but at the same time we have admitted that administrative independence **must in no way automatically lead to canonical and eucharistic independence.** Such communion has not been broken by us, in spite of the one-sided decision of the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR.*

‘2. We ask each other’s forgiveness, so that from now on we should not reproach anybody for the actions which lead to the division and the founding of the THCA.’

*Comment of the FROC bishops: It is not a matter of reproaches but of the essence of the actions of both sides, which have led to administrative division and the founding of the THCA. By examining each concrete action, we would be able mutually to understand the depth of the causes, and proceeding from that, calmly and without detriment, remove their consequences in the present.*

‘3. We consider the organization of the THCA to be an unlawful act and abolish it.’

*Comment of the FROC bishops: The very formulation of this point seems to us to be faulty in view of the final aim of our joint efforts.*

‘4. We consider the consecration of the three hierarchs: Theodore, Seraphim and Agathangelus, which was carried out by their Graces Lazarus and Valentine, to be unlawful. Their candidacies should be presented in the order that is obligatory for all candidates for hierarchical rank accepted in ROCOR, and, if they turn out to be worthy, then, after their confession of faith and acceptance of the hierarchical oath, they will be confirmed in the hierarchical rank.’

*Comment of the FROC bishops: We do not agree at all that the episcopal consecrations performed by us were not lawful. The obligatory order for all candidates for hierarchical rank accepted in ROCOR could not be a guide for us in our actions since at that time we were administratively independent of ROCOR. If we approach this demand from a strictly formal point of view, then the Hierarchical Synod should have asked us concerning our agreement or disagreement with the new consecrations, especially the consecration of his Grace Bishop Eutyches – which was not done. In spite of your limitation of our rights, we have recognized these consecrations and are far from the thought of demanding a confession of faith and acceptance of the hierarchical oath a second time, specially for us.*

‘5. In the same way, all the other actions carried out by Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine and the THCA organized by them which exceeded the authority of the diocesan bishops, but belonged only to the province of the Hierarchical Sobor and Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR, are to be considered to be invalid.’

*Comment of the FROC bishops: Until the moment that we ceased to be members of ROCOR, and the THCA was formed, all our actions and suggestions were presented for discussion and confirmation by these higher church instances. Having*

*conditionally separated from ROCOR in administrative matters, we were entitled to carry out these actions.*

*'6. Archbishop Lazarus is reinstated in the rights of a ruling hierarch with the title "Archbishop of Odessa and Tambov".'*

*Comment of the FROC bishops: The formulation of this point admits of an ambiguous interpretation and is therefore on principle unacceptable for us. Judging objectively, his Grace Archbishop Lazarus did not lose his rights as a ruling bishop, in spite of the ukaz of the Hierarchical Synod concerning his retirement. The ukaz seems to us to be canonically ill-founded, and therefore lacking force and unrealized. We suggest the formulation: 'In view of the erroneous actions of the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR, Archbishop Lazarus is not to be considered as having been retired and is recognized as having the rights of the ruling hierarch of his diocese with the title (Archbishop of Tambov and Odessa).'*

*'7. Bishop Valentine will be restored to his rights as the ruling hierarch of Suzdal and Vladimir after the removal of the accusations against him on the basis of an investigation by a Spiritual Court appointed by the present Hierarchical Sobor.'*

*Comment of the FROC bishops: The given point is excluded, in agreement with the Ukaz of the Hierarchical Synod.<sup>82</sup>*

*'8. To bring order into ecclesiastical matters on the territory of Russia a Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Hierarchs is to be organized which does not encroach on the fullness of ecclesiastical power, but which is in unquestioning submission to the Hierarchical Sobor and the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR. One of the member of the Hierarchical Conference will be a member of the Synod, in accordance with the decision of the Hierarchical Sobor.'*

*Comment of the FROC bishops: It is suggested that this formulation be changed, and consequently also the meaning of the eighth point: 'The THCA does not encroach on the fullness of ecclesiastical power. In certain exceptional situations it recognizes its spiritual and administrative submission to the Hierarchical Sobor of ROCOR. One of the members of the Hierarchical Conference will be a temporary, regular member of the Synod, in accordance with the decision of the Hierarchical Sobor of ROCOR and the Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Bishops.'*

*'9. After the signing of the Act it will be published in all the organs of the church press, and in particular in those publications in which their Graces Lazarus and Valentine published material against the Hierarchical Sobor and Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR.'*

*Comment of the FROC bishops: The formulation should be changed as follows: After the signing of the Act it will be published in all the organs of the church press,*

---

<sup>82</sup> This refers to the ukaz dated November 18 / December 1, 1994, quoted above, which reinstated Vladyka Valentine as Bishop of Suzdal and Vladimir. It should be pointed out that Vladyka Valentine had been raised to the rank of archbishop by the THCA in the previous year.

*and in particular in those publications in which their Graces Lazarus and Valentine published material explaining certain hasty actions of the Hierarchical Synod and Sobor of ROCOR.”*<sup>83</sup>

Now on January 3, Bishop Hilarion on behalf of the ROCOR Synod had sent a respectfully worded invitation to Bishops Theodore, Agathangelus and Seraphim to come to New York for the February 9/22 session of the Synod and “for the formalities of re-establishing concelebration”.<sup>84</sup> It is significant that the Synod had also invited Bishop Eutyches, who was *not* a member of the Synod – but not Archbishop Lazarus, who *was* a member of the Synod, as agreed at the Lesna Sobor.

When Bishops Theodore and Agathangelus arrived in New York, they were listened to and on the next day, in Bishop Agathangelus’ words, “we were handed a ‘Decree of the Hierarchical Synod of the Synod of ROCOR’, in which their Graces Lazarus and Valentine, and also Bishops Theodore, Seraphim and I, were declared to be banned from serving.”<sup>85</sup> For Vladyka Theodore and me this was like a bolt from the blue... We were told that the reason for this decision was our supposed non-fulfilment of the conciliar Act, which had been signed by, among the other Hierarchs, their Graces Lazarus and Valentine. The point was that the conference of Russian Bishops which had been formed in agreement with this same Act had asked for several formulations in the Act to be changed, so as not to introduce disturbance into the ranks of the believers by the categorical nature of certain points. This was a request, not a demand. But, however hard we tried, we could not convince the Synod that none of the Russian Bishops was insisting and that we were all ready to accept the Act in the form in which it had been composed. We met with no understanding on the part of the members of the Synod. Vladyka Theodore and I affirmed in writing that we accepted the text of the Act in the form in which it had been composed and asked for a postponement in the carrying out of the ‘Decree’ until the position of all the absent Russian Bishops on this question could be clarified. In general we agreed to make any compromises if only the ‘Decree’ were not put into effect, because in essence it meant only one thing – the final break between the Russian parishes and ROCOR.

“We gradually came to understand that it was not any canonical transgression of the Russian Bishops (there was none), nor any disagreement with the text of the conciliar Act, nor, still less, any mythical ‘avaricious aims’ that was the reason for the composition of this document, which, without any

---

<sup>83</sup> The comments of the FROC were published in *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, № 22, 1995, pp. 26-27.

<sup>84</sup> *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, № 23, 1995, pp. 32-33.

<sup>85</sup> This Decree, dated February 9/22, also stated that the Odessa-Tambov and Suzdal-Vladimir dioceses were declared “widowed” (a term used only if the ruling bishop has died) and were to be submitted temporarily to Metropolitan Vitaly. See *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, № 23, 1995, p. 31; *Tserkovnie Novosti*, № 1A (43), February, 1995, p. 3.

trial or investigation, banned the five Hierarchs from serving. It was the Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Bishops, which had been established by the Council that took place in Lesna monastery, that was the real reason giving birth to the 'Decree'. The Sobor of Hierarchs, moved in those days by 'Paschal joy' (as Metropolitan Vitaly repeated several times), finally came to create an organ of administration in Russia which, if not independent, but subject to the Synod, was nevertheless an organ of administration. When the 'Paschal joy' had passed, the Synodal Bishops suddenly realized: they had themselves reduced their own power, insofar as, with their agreement, Hierarchs could meet in vast Russia and discuss vital problems. Before that, the Church Abroad had not allowed itself to behave like that. And it was this, unfortunately, that the foreign Archpastors could not bear. On receiving for confirmation the protocols of the first session of the Hierarchical Conference with concrete proposals to improve Church life in Russia, the foreign Bishops were completely nonplussed. Therefore a reason that did not in fact exist was thought up – the supposed non-fulfilment of the Act.

"The members of the Synod, exceeding their authority, since such decisions are in the competence of the Sobor, decided, by means of canonical bans, to confirm their sole authority over the whole of Russia – both historical Russia and Russia abroad. The very foundations of the Church Abroad as a part of the Russian Church living abroad were trampled on, and the Synod on its own initiative ascribed to itself the rights and prerogatives of the Local Russian Church.

"It did not even ponder the fact that, in banning at one time five Hierarchs, it was depriving more than 150 parishes – that is many thousands of Orthodox people – of archpastoral care. Cancelling the labour of many years of Hierarchs, priests and conscious, pious laymen in our Fatherland.

"In Russia a very real war is now being waged for human souls; every day is full of work. Depriving Orthodox Christians of their pastors without any objective reason witnesses to the haughtiness and lack of love towards our country and its people on the part of the members of the Synod Abroad. We, the Orthodox from Russia, are called 'common people' by Metropolitan Vitaly (thank you, Vladyko Metropolitan!).

"Vladyka Theodore and I were promised that, in exchange for our treachery, we would be confirmed in our hierarchical rank. And it was even proclaimed that we would be appointed to foreign sees. For us personally, who were born and brought up in Russia, this was very painful to hear..."<sup>86</sup>

This act of blackmail – we recognize you if you accept a foreign see, but do not recognize you if you stay in Russia – exposed the complete lack of canonical justification in the acts of the ROCOR Synod. Let us recall that: (a)

---

<sup>86</sup> "Witness" of February 15/28, 1995, *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 23, 1995, pp. 35-36.

Bishops Theodore and Agathangelus had just been formally recognized as canonical bishops, (b) they had agreed in writing to fulfil all of the ROCOR Synod's conditions, including the signing of the Act without any alterations, (c) they had not been accused of any canonical transgressions, and (d) they had not been subjected to any investigation or trial, as the canons demanded. Their only crime, it would appear, was that they lived in Russia – a novel charge against a bishop of the Russian Church!

On February 11/24 the ROCOR Synod issued an epistle which for the first time contained a semblance of canonical justification in the form of a list of canons supposedly transgressed by the five Russian bishops. Unfortunately, they clearly had no relevance to the matter in hand. Thus what relevance could the 57<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Council of Carthage – “On the Donatists and the children baptized by the Donatists” – have to the bishops of the Free Russian Orthodox Church?!<sup>87</sup>

On February 15/28, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) wrote to Bishop Valentine: “I cannot fail to express my great sorrow with regard to the recent Church events. Moreover, I wish to say to you that I was glad to get to know Vladykas Theodore and Agathangelus better. They think well and in an Orthodox manner. It is amazing that our foreign Bishops should not have valued them and should have treated them so crudely in spite of all the acts and the whole unifying tendency which was just expressed by Metropolitan Vitaly at the last Sobor. The whole tragedy lies in the fact that even the latter wanted to construct everything solely on foreign forces that do not have the information necessary to decide problems which are strange and unfamiliar to them. Therefore they do not want to offer this [task] to the new forces that have arisen in Russia.

“As a result, we are presented with the complete liquidation of these healthy forces. This is a great victory of the dark forces of our Soviet enemies of Orthodoxy in the persons of the Moscow Patriarchate.

“I am glad that you will not give in to them, and I pray God that He help you to carry on the Orthodox cause, apparently without the apostate forces of Orthodox Abroad...”<sup>88</sup>

The next month Archbishop Valentine recounted these events in a Lenten letter to his flock, and continued: “This *second* instance of administrative pressure on the Russian Hierarchs, and, moreover, in such an undisguisedly *cunning* form, when flattering mentions and assurances of friendship and invitations came in the name of the Synod of ROCOR, while in fact another attempt to *usurp* power over the Russian flock was taking place, forces me to make certain clarifications.

---

<sup>87</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, № 1A (43), February, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>88</sup> *Suzdal'skij Palomnik*, № 23, 1995, p. 34.



“On November 7/20, 1920 the holy Patriarch Tikhon together with the Sacred Synod and the Higher Ecclesiastical Council of the Russian Church passed the exceptionally important Resolution № 362 concerning the self-governing of Dioceses in the case of the absence of a canonical Higher Church Administration or the impossibility of communicating with it. On the basis of this Ukaz, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) organized the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In Russia on the basis of this Ukaz there was organized the Catacomb or ‘Tikhonite’ Church under the leadership of its inspirer, the holy New Martyr Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. In its time the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad helped in the establishment of a lawful hierarchy in Russia, consecrating to the Episcopate their Graces Lazarus, Valentine and Benjamin. Instead of expanding the Church in the Homeland, there appeared the temptation of ruling it from abroad, declaring itself the ‘Central Church Authority’, which is what the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR did in practice in April, 1994 (cf. *Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, special issue, №№ 18,19,20). But then a declaration was made concerning the supposedly ‘unlawful’ creation by the Russian Hierarchs, on the basis of Ukaz № 362, of a Temporary Higher Church Administration, whereas the Ukaz № 362 of Patriarch Tikhon of November 7/20 said directly: ‘The care for the organization of a Higher Church authority... is the unfailing duty of the eldest according to rank of the Hierarchs in the indicated group.’

“Intra-ecclesiastical freedom and the dignities of the Bishops based on the Holy Canons do not permit administrative arbitrariness and do not give the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR the right to the supreme administration of the Church. And our following of the Canons and Ukaz № 362, which was specially written for the Russian Dioceses existing in identical conditions, cannot give an excuse to whoever it may be to declare the Russian Hierarchs to be in some kind of ‘schism’. Having neither reasons, nor lawful authority or canonical rights to ‘ban’ the Russian Hierarchs, the Chancellery of the Synod of ROCOR is only witnessing, in the latest incident, to a *deep crisis* in the administration of ROCOR itself, when the President of the Hierarchical Synod Metropolitan Vitaly is not able to control the resolutions and ukazes issuing from the Chancellery of the Synod. It is impossible to take the documents signed by Vladyka Metropolitan Vitaly seriously when in the course of less than a year their meaning has several times changed to the complete opposite.<sup>89</sup> It is impossible to believe that in the ‘punitive actions’ of the Russian Hierarchs that have now become quite usual there is contained love for Russia, about which the hierarchs of ROCOR speak so eloquently. It is impossible to look on with indifference as, instead of building up the

---

<sup>89</sup> Vladyka was probably thinking of the incident, a little less than a year before, when Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles declared that in its session of February 21-24 the Hierarchical Synod had banned both Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine from serving at the same time that Metropolitan Vitaly was writing to Bishop Valentine that he was “in no wise banned from serving” (*Suzdal’skij Palomnik*, № 21, 1995, pp. 28-29).

Church in the much-suffering Homeland, they incessantly 'divide territory', as a result of which churches of the FROC fall into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate."<sup>90</sup>

On February 27 / March 12, 1995 Archbishops Lazarus and Valentine and Bishops Theodore, Seraphim and Agathangelus met in Suzdal and re-established the THCA which had been created on March 5/18, 1994. Then they decided: "To qualify the Decree of the Hierarchical Sobor [sic – Synod would have been more accurate] of ROCOR of February 9/22 and the claims contained in it to leadership of the whole Russian Church by the Hierarchical Synod and the First-Hierarchy of ROCOR as exceeding their authority and a transgression of the Holy Canons and the Statute of ROCOR. In particular, the 8<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council has been transgressed, which declares: 'May the haughtiness of secular power not creep in under the guise of sacred acts; and may we not lose, little by little and without it being noticed, the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us through His Blood. And so it is pleasing to the Holy and Ecumenical Council that every Diocese should preserve in purity and without oppression the rights that belonged to it from the beginning... And if anyone should propose any resolution contrary to this, let it be invalid.'"<sup>91</sup>

It is significant that it was precisely this Canon that was quoted by Hieromartyr Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd, when he laid the foundations for the Catacomb Church in January, 1928. And indeed, the arguments between ROCOR and the FROC increasingly came to resemble the arguments between Metropolitan Sergius and the Catacomb Church, on the one hand, and Sergius and the foreign bishops who separated from him, on the other. The issue in 1928-30, as in 1995, was the question: who, if anyone, had the power to create a central organ of Church administration having full patriarchal power to rule over all the bishops of the Russian Church? Metropolitan Sergius then, like Metropolitan Vitaly today, claimed that he had such power, and proceeded to act with greater fierceness and disregard for the canons than any real pope or patriarch. But the Catacomb bishops then, like the FROC bishops today, claimed that since the death of the last canonical Patriarch and the imprisonment of his locum tenens, Metropolitan Peter, there was no alternative but to return to the decentralized form of Church administration prescribed by the never-repealed Patriarchal ukaz № 362.

According to the ukaz, neighbouring bishops *in identical circumstances* could *voluntarily* unite into TCHAs and govern themselves as autonomous Churches until the convening of the next canonical Sobor of the whole Russian Church. But (a) bishops living in different States and separated by

---

<sup>90</sup> Suzdal'skij Palomnik, № 22, 1995, pp. 30-31; Tserkovnie Novosti, № 1A (43), February, 1995, pp. 7-8.

<sup>91</sup> Suzdal'skij Palomnik, № 23, 1995, p. 42.

thousands of miles of ocean obviously do not live in identical circumstances, and (b) no group of bishops or TCHA has power over any other TCHA, nor can it claim to have rule over the whole Russian Church, so that (c) full patriarchal power can belong only to the future Local Council of the All-Russian Church and the organs elected by it. To these restrictions must be added, for hierarchs of ROCOR, those detailed in its still-unrepealed Statute, that is: (a) ROCOR is only a *part* of the Russian Church, like any other TCHA or autonomous group of bishops, and certainly not its real *centre*, as it has recently claimed; (b) its administrative powers extend only over the Church *Abroad, outside* Russia; (c) it must continue to commemorate “the Episcopate of the Russian Church” – that is, of the Church *inside* Russia; and (d) even its powers over the Church Abroad are valid only until the fall of the atheist power, when power returns to the Church inside Russia...<sup>92</sup>

### Conclusion

Today, three and a half years since the second schism between ROCOR and the FROC, the situation has not changed in essence. Almost immediately after the events of February, 1995, frightened by the threat of defrocking by the ROCOR Synod, Archbishop Lazarus and his vicar, Bishop Agathangelus, left the FROC and returned, “repenting”, to ROCOR.<sup>93</sup> But what has always, since 1990, been the core of ROCOR-FROC inside Russia, the Suzdal diocese, has remained firm, and has in fact increased in strength.

In accordance with a resolution of the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR in 1996, the Hierarchical Conference of the Russian Bishops was stripped of what little power it had: its representation in ROCOR was annulled, and not one of the Russian bishops entered into the ROCOR Synod. At the same Council meeting Bishop Valentine was defrocked. The FROC, naturally, refused to recognize this decision.<sup>94</sup>

The desertion of Archbishop Lazarus requires some comment. The secret consecration of Fr. Lazarus (Zhurbenko) was the first major mistake of ROCOR inside Russia. It was surprising in that ROCOR might have been expected to consecrate, not the newly appeared Lazarus, but one of the fourteen hieromonks who had been received under the omophorion of Metropolitan Philaret on November 26 / December 7, 1977, after the death of their Catacomb archpastor, Archbishop Anthony Galynsky-Mikhailovsky, in

---

<sup>92</sup> As Protopriest Andrew Osetrov writes: “The Church Abroad should either transfer its Administration to Russia and no longer call it the Synod of ROCOR (the more so in that one can enter and leave the Homeland now without hindrance), or, if the hierarchs of ROCOR do not want to return to the Homeland, they must recognize their Church administration to be subject to the administration of the Church in the Homeland” (*Suzdal'skij Blagovest'*, № 3, January-February, 1997, p. 3).

<sup>93</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, №№ 3-4, May-August, 1995, pp. 3-4.

<sup>94</sup> *Suzdal'skij Blagovest'*, № 3, January-February, 1997, p. 3.

1976.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, there were other distinguished Catacomb pastors with links to ROCOR, such as Fr. Michael Rozhdestvensky (+1988), who would have been eminently suitable candidates for the episcopate.

Besides, the career of Fr. Lazarus himself had not been without controversy. Although he had been reared in the Catacomb Church, and had been in the camps, he had been refused ordination to the priesthood by three Catacomb hierarchs, including Archbishop Anthony Galynsky-Mikhailovsky – all of whom he later accused, by a strange coincidence, of being uncanonical. He then joined the Moscow Patriarchate and received ordination there from a certain Bishop Benjamin of Irkutsk. Only a year later, he returned to the Catacomb Church in Siberia, and was instrumental, according to some catacomb sources, in sowing such suspicion against the Catacomb Bishop Theodosius Bahmetev (+1986) that almost the whole of his flock deserted him.<sup>96</sup> Some even accuse him of having betrayed Catacomb Christians to the KGB. Be that as it may – and such accusations are easily made, but much less easily proved – there can be no doubt that a large part of the Catacomb Church distrusted Lazarus and refused to have anything to do with him. This was true both of the “moderates” and the “extremists” in the Catacomb Church, both of the “Seraphimo-Gennadiite” branch, led by Metropolitan Epiphany (Kaminsky)<sup>97</sup>, of the “Matthewites” led by Schema-Monk Epiphany (Chernov)<sup>98</sup>, and of the “passportless” branch represented by the Catacomb Archimandrite Gury (Pavlov), who, when about to be consecrated to the episcopate in New York in 1990 by ROCOR, categorically refused when he heard that Lazarus was going to be a co-consecrator.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> The full text of this resolution was as follows: “There were discussions on the question of the fourteen clerics accepted into communion of prayer from the Catacomb Church who submitted their petitions to the Hierarchical Synod through Archimandrite Michael of the monastery of St. Panteleimon on the Holy Mountain, which were received on November 26 / December 7, 1977. At that time the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR in its session of November 26 / December 7, 1977 accepted the following resolution:

“Trusting the witness of the fourteen priests that their reposed leader Archbishop Anthony (Galynsky) was correctly consecrated to the episcopate, and carried out his service secretly from the civil authorities, it has been decided to accept them into communion of prayer, having informed them that they can carry out all those sacred actions which priests can carry out according to the Church canons, and also giving the monastic clerics the right to carry out monastic tonsures. They are to be informed of this in the same way as their address was received.”

The following priests were accepted into communion: Hieromonks Michael, Raphael, Nicholas, Nicholas, Nathaniel, Epiphanius, Michael and Sergius, and Abbots Barsonuphius and Nicholas,

<sup>96</sup> E. A. Petrova, *op. cit.*

<sup>97</sup> See his (unpublished) letter to Metropolitan Vitaly, November 21 / December 4, 1992.

<sup>98</sup> V.K., *Kratkij ocherk ekkleziologicheskikh i yurisdiktsionnykh sporov v grecheskoj starostil'noj tserkvi*, St. Petersburg: Izdanie Vestnika I.P.Ts. *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, 1998, pp. 30-31.

<sup>99</sup> He died on Christmas Day, 1995/96. See *Vozdvizhenie*, № 2 (15), February, 1996; “A Biography of Archimandrite Gury”, *The True Vine*, vol. 3, № 3 (1992).

It was true also of Fr. Michael Rozhdestvensky. He was “the initiator of the complete rejection of the then priest Lazarus Zhurbenko because of the latter’s departing to the MP for his ordination. At a meeting of catacomb clergy in the city of Tambov in 1978, in the presence of the still-flourishing Abbot P, Fr. Vissarion and others, Fr. Michael confirmed this position. This decision was supported in those years by all without exception of the catacomb clergy. But later, when Vladyka Barnabas was searching for a worthy candidate for consecration to the rank of Bishop of the Catacomb Church, Fr. Lazarus (then already a hieromonk) craftily suggested the widowed Fr. Michael and himself was called to invite him to be consecrated to the episcopate. On receiving the invitation with the signature of Hieromonk Lazarus (Zhurbenko), Fr. Michael Rozhdestvensky, naturally, did not go. Vladyka Barnabas was left with neither a choice nor time, and he was forced to consecrate Hieromonk Lazarus to the episcopate. Fr. Michael’s position in relation to Vladyka Lazarus remained unchanging to the very end of his life [in 1988].”<sup>100</sup>

But not only did ROCOR consecrate Fr. Lazarus instead of eminently more suitable candidates such as Fr. Michael: they used his testimony as their sole guide to the canonicity or otherwise of the other Catacomb bishops in Russia. Thus on May 5/18, 1990 the ROCOR Synod reversed the previous decision of the Synod under Metropolitan Philaret to recognize Archbishop Anthony-Mikhailovsky and his ordinations, and told the priests ordained by him “to regulate their canonical position by turning towards his Grace Bishop Lazarus of Tambov and Morshansk”. Again, on August 2/15, 1990 another Ukaz was distributed (but not published in the Church press) which rejected the canonicity both of the “Seraphimo-Gennadiite” and the “Galynskyite” branches of the Catacomb Church, causing widespread havoc in both. Thus one “Seraphimo-Gennadiite” priest from Moscow took off his cross, saying that he was not a priest according to ROCOR and went to Bishop Lazarus to be reordained. His flock, suddenly abandoned, scattered in different directions.<sup>101</sup>

The main accusation against the hierarchs of these branches was that they could not prove their apostolic succession by producing ordination certificates, as required by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Apostolic Canon. This was, of course, a serious deficiency; but in view of both groups’ favourable attitude towards ROCOR, it would seem to have been more reasonable and charitable to have talked with them directly, learned their history and their point of view on the problem, and discussed with them some way of correcting this deficiency without resorting to the punitive measures of a papal curia. And such a charitable, unifying attitude to the various Catacomb groups had been urged – alas, without success – by Bishop Gregory (Grabbe).

---

<sup>100</sup> “Kritika zhurnala ‘Vosvrashchenie’”, *Tserkovnie Novosti*, № 11 (67), November-December, 1997, p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> Personal testimony of the present writer.

As Archbishop Hilarion has recently admitted to the present writer: "The statement which I signed as Deputy Secretary of the Synod was based entirely on the information given to us by Archbishop Lazarus. He reported to the Synod on the different groups of the Catacombs and convinced the members of the Synod (or the Council – I don't recall offhand which) that their canonicity was questionable and in some instances – their purity of doctrine as well (e.g. *imyabozhniki*). The Synod members hoped (naively) that this would convince the catacomb groups to rethink their position and seek from the Russian Church Abroad correction of their orders to guarantee apostolic succession. We now see that it was a mistake to issue the statement and to have based our understanding of the catacomb situation wholly on the information provided by Vl. Lazarus. I personally regret this whole matter very much and seek to have a better understanding of and a sincere openness towards the long-suffering confessors of the Russian Catacombs."<sup>102</sup>

So Bishop Lazarus used the authority of ROCOR to take his revenge on Catacomb bishops who had displeased him and to have himself exalted above the Russian flock in their place.<sup>103</sup> He was therefore the first instrument - and the first beneficiary - of ROCOR's policy of "divide and rule" towards the Catacomb Church. As such, he could not afford to break his links with the Synod that had promoted him, and ran back to it with his tail between his legs.

But his return to ROCOR has not meant better times for his flock in the Ukraine. Thus Hieromonk Hilarion (Goncharenko), in a petition for transfer from ROCOR to the FROC, wrote: "Vladyka Lazarus together with the Synod Abroad has cunningly and finally destroyed the whole Church in the Ukraine. My former friends and brothers in the Lord have... turned to me with tearful sobs and the painful question: 'What are we to do now in the stormy and destructive situation that has been created?'"<sup>104</sup>

Similar disturbances have taken place in other dioceses of ROCOR inside Russia. Thus Bishop Eutyches has been accused of serious dogmatical errors related to ecumenism.<sup>105</sup>

Thus ROCOR, which had a golden opportunity to gather all the anti-MP Catacomb Church forces under its wing in the early 1990s, only succeeded in creating further divisions and weakening the witness of the True Church. The

---

<sup>102</sup> E-mail message, 15 July, 1998. For more on Bishop Lazarus and Archbishop Anthony, see "I vrata adovy nye odoleyut Yeyo", *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti*, № 3, January-February, 1998, pp. 17-18.

<sup>103</sup> Some years ago, Archbishop Lazarus insisted on renaming his Odessa diocese "the True Orthodox Catacomb Church", thereby laying claim to being the sole heir of the historic Catacomb Church and implicitly separating himself from both ROCOR and the FROC.

<sup>104</sup> *Suzdal'skij Blagovest'*, N 3, January-February, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> *Suzdal'skij Blagovest'*, № 3, January-February, 1997, p. 3; "Stupenchatij protsess apostasii v Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkvi", *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, № 4 (4), 1996, pp. 8-10.

good it did by consecrating such good pastors as Bishop Valentine was almost outweighed by the harm it did by undermining Bishop Valentine and the Suzdal diocese, by consecrating hirelings and wolves who only brought division to the flock of Christ, and by in general acting like foreign dictators reminiscent of the MP hierarchs. Experienced Catacomb Christians soon discerned the signs, and fled from the spirit of sergianism (and ecumenism) in ROCOR as they had fled from it in the MP.

It has been left to the FROC to take up the burden which ROCOR has failed to carry. Thus it is she, rather than ROCOR, which is now gathering the Catacomb Christians under her wing - but without issuing bans against those groups which do not recognize her authority. In accordance with the Patriarchal Ukaz, she has sought friendly relations with, but not administrative rule over, the other truly Orthodox groups in Russia in the spirit of love that must characterize all relationships within the Church. She claims neither to be the one and only Russian Church, nor to be the administrative centre of the Russian Church. But she has pledged to work towards the convening of that future canonical Local Council of the Russian Church which she, like ROCOR in previous decades, recognizes to be the highest authority in the Church and the only competent judge of the actions of all her constituent parts.

What are the prospects of reunion between the FROC and ROCOR? In the present writer's opinion, this can only take place under one or other of two possible conditions:-

1. A complete change of heart in the ROCOR Synod towards the FROC and repentance for its past canonical transgressions, involving: (a) fitting punishment of those who have wrought such havoc in Russia in recent years, especially Archbishop Mark of Berlin; (b) the removal of all bans on the FROC bishops; (c) the recognition of the FROC's autonomy in accordance with the Patriarchal Ukaz.

Such a change of heart looks unlikely in view of the events of recent years, when the ascendancy of Archbishop Mark over the ROCOR Synod has become more and more marked. His shameful negotiations with KGB Agent "Drozdov", i.e. "Patriarch" Alexis Ridiger, in December, 1996, and his part in forcing Metropolitan Vitaly to expel the confessors of Hebron and Jerusalem and apologize before the PLO President Arafat in July, 1997, have shocked the Orthodox world. In the Sobor of May, 1998, after Mark had been removed from the Synod by the First-Hierarchy, a golden opportunity presented itself to have this evil genius of the Russian Church finally removed from power; but the opportunity was lost.

And so ROCOR's drift towards unity with the MP continues unabated; having rid itself of the "Soviet filth" of the FROC, the majority of its bishops

are now hypocritically ready to unite with the “Mother Church” of the Soviet MP. Indeed, having renounced the great majority of the truly confessing Christians in Russia, it is only logical that ROCOR should seek an alliance with the other side, perhaps on the basis of an autonomous status for ROCOR within the Moscow Patriarchate. After all, Church life does not stand still, but continually moves between the poles of good and evil, life and death; so that a movement away from one pole inevitably involves a movement closer to the other pole...

In view of this there remains the other possibility: 2. A schism in ROCOR allowing the right-thinking Christians in it both inside Russia and abroad, to separate from their Sovietizing hierarchs and be reunited with the confessing Christians of other Russian Church jurisdictions. Already there are many members of ROCOR inside Russia who sympathize with, and by no means reject, their brothers in the FROC. Both they and the FROC are suffering persecution from the MP; both they and the FROC have suffered the effects of ROCOR’s maladministration and (in the case of certain hierarchs) outright treachery. It is only logical, therefore, that these two groups, having an identical faith and being “in identical conditions” (to use the language of the Patriarchal Ukaz), should reunite when the time is right – that is, when the complete failure of ROCOR’s mission inside Russia becomes evident to all.

But there must be no forcing, no exertion of power at the expense of love. That is the primary lesson of these tragic years since the fall of Soviet power. “Lest little by little and without it being noticed, we lose the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us through His Blood...”

*September 26 / October 9, 1998.  
Repose of St. John the Theologian.*

(First published in Russian in *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti*, N 8, June-September, 1999, pp. 7-18. And in English in *Vertograd*, NN 16-17, February-March, 2000, pp. 12-37)



## **5. THE RIGHT WAY OF RESISTING APOSTASY: A REPLY**

In the August, 1999 issue of *Uspenskij Listok*, Hieromonk Dionysius (Alferov) offers a tribute to St. John Maximovich with most of which the venerators of St. John can be in full agreement. St. John was indeed one of the miracles of twentieth-century Orthodoxy, a saint and wonderworker to be compared with the greatest hierarchs of antiquity. However, after a few paragraphs it becomes clear that the main reason why Fr. Dionysius wrote this article was not to glorify St. John, but to use St. John as a weapon with which to beat what he calls the “ultra-rightists” in the contemporary Russian Church – that is, those who consider the Moscow Patriarchate to be a graceless organisation. The purpose of this article is to consider what relationship the supposed views of St. John have to the contemporary debate on the status of the MP.

First, what do we know about St. John’s views on the MP? The answer, surprisingly, is: very little. As far as the present writer knows, he never expressed himself in public on the presence or absence of grace in the MP. What we do know is that once, in Shanghai shortly after the last war, St. John commemorated Metropolitan Anastasy of ROCOR together with Patriarch Alexis of the MP. What we also know is that in a letter to Metropolitan Anastasy St. John later very humbly *repented* of this act (the letter was seen by Anastasia Georgievna Shatilova in the archives of the ROCOR Synod).

Some have pointed to a certain “liberalism” practised by St. John in relation to “World Orthodoxy” in general. There seems to be some foundation for believing that St. John was a “liberal”, not so much in his evaluation of the errors of “World Orthodoxy” (in relation to which he could be strict, - cf. his article on the decline of the Ecumenical Patriarchate), as in the method of his reception of people from World Orthodoxy. Thus it is known that he admitted the fledgling Dutch Orthodox Church into communion from the MP without insisting that they immediately change from the new to the old calendar – although he was so attached to the Old Calendar that even in civil letters he always used only the Old Calendar date. Again, Metropolitan Philaret of Blessed Memory recounts in one of his letters that he was forced to rebuke St. John once for making hardly any distinction, in the matter of eucharistic communion, between the flock of ROCOR and that of the Evlogians in Paris – although St. John had strongly condemned the Eulogian heresy of Sophianism.

What conclusion are we to draw from this “liberalism”? I believe that we cannot draw any clear conclusion about St. John’s views on the ecclesiological status of the MP or “World Orthodoxy” in his time. The most we can conclude, it seems to me, is that: (a) he once made a serious error in commemorating the Soviet patriarch, of which he immediately and sincerely repented, and (b) in regard to the laypeople of other jurisdictions he practised

the maximum degree of “economy” or condescension, judging that in our extremely difficult and confusing times such loving condescension was indeed the most appropriate way of building up the Church of Christ.

But let us suppose for a moment that Fr. Dionysius is right, and that St. John was a “liberal”, not only in his method of receiving people from the jurisdictions of “World Orthodoxy”, but also in his estimate of those jurisdictions’ ecclesiastical status. What follows from this in regard to the contemporary debate on the status of the MP?

Again the answer is: very little.

First, let us bear in mind that St. John died in 1966, a full generation ago, when the pan-heresy of ecumenism was only just beginning to penetrate the Slavic Churches (the MP joined the World Council of Churches in 1961, and the Serbian Patriarch became president of the WCC in 1965). It was still some years to ROCOR’s definitive condemnation of ecumenism in 1983. Even if St. John had been a “liberal” in his lifetime, there is no reason at all to believe that he would have dissociated himself from his Synod’s anathema against ecumenism if he had lived to 1983, still less if he had lived to 1999. The heresy and apostasy of the MP, like all apostatical movements in history, developed and deepened over time. What reason can there be for believing that the thinking of such a holy man as St. John would not also have developed in response to the changing situation?

Secondly, the infallible voice of the Church is not to be identified with the voice of any individual father of the Church, however holy, but only with the *consensus* of the Fathers. There are many cases of individual fathers making pronouncements which have not been accepted by the Church as a whole. As Fr. Basil Lurye writes, commenting on the 15<sup>th</sup> canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople: *“‘The fathers’ are accepted only as the consensus patrum (‘the agreement of the fathers’, ‘the council of the fathers’), that is, those patristic judgements which were not contested in council by other fathers.’*<sup>106</sup>

If we make the mistake of identifying the opinion of this or that individual father or saint on this question with the infallible voice of the Church, we may find ourselves labelling undoubted saints of the Church as either “ultra-rightists” or “ultra-leftists”, to use Fr. Dionysius’ terminology. For example, let us take the case of holy Hieroconfessor Victor, Bishop of Vyatka, who was recently recommended for canonisation by a commission of the MP on the basis of the incorruption of his relics and the many miracles that have been wrought at his shrine.<sup>107</sup> He was perhaps the very first hierarch to separate

---

<sup>106</sup> “Pravilo 15 sobora dvukratnogo: otvet chitateliu”, *Vertograd-Inform*, N 5 (50), May, 1999, p. 40.

<sup>107</sup> Anna Ilyinskaya, “Obretenie chestnykh moschej sviashchenno-ispovednika Viktora Viatskago”, *Pravoslavnaia Rus’*, N 17 (1638), 1/14 September, 1999, pp. 5-7.

from Metropolitan Sergius in 1927, and his condemnation of Sergius was about as "extreme" as it was possible to be. Thus he called Sergianism "worse than heresy", and in his last known letter, of unknown date, he wrote: "In his destructive and treacherous actions against the Church, Metropolitan Sergius has also committed a terrible blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which according to the unlying word of Christ will never be forgiven him, neither in this life, nor in the life to come.

"'He who does not gather with Me,' says the Lord, 'scatters.' 'Either recognize the tree (the Church) as good and its fruit as good, or recognize the tree as bad and its fruit as bad' (Matthew 12.33). 'Therefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto me, but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto me' (Matthew 12.31). 'Fulfilling the measure of his sin,' Metropolitan Sergius together with his Synod, by his ukaz of October 8/21, 1927, is introducing a new formula of commemoration.

"Mixing together into one, despite the word of God, the 'faithful with the unfaithful' (II Corinthians 6.14-18), the Holy Church and those fighting to the death against her, in the great and most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, the metropolitan by this blasphemy of his destroys the prayerful meaning of the great sacrament and its grace-filled significance for the eternal salvation of the souls of Orthodox believers. Hence the service becomes not only graceless because of the gracelessness of the celebrant, but an abomination in the eyes of God, and for that reason both the celebrant and he who participates in it subject themselves to severe condemnation.

"Being in all his activity an anti-church heretic, as transforming the Holy Orthodox Church from the house of the grace-filled salvation of believers into a graceless, carnal organization deprived of the spirit of life, Metropolitan Sergius has at the same time, through his conscious renunciation of the truth and in his mindless betrayal of Christ, become an open apostate from God the Truth.

"Without a formal external trial by the Church (which cannot be carried out on him), he 'is self-condemned' (Titus 3.10-11); he has ceased to be what he was - a 'server of the truth', according to the word: 'Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one live in it; and his office let another take' (Acts 1.20)."<sup>108</sup>

Now according to Fr. Dionysius' criterion, St. Victor must surely be considered an "ultra-rightist", because, in spite of his living right at the beginning of the Sergianist schism and a full generation before the MP's acceptance of the heresy of ecumenism, he nevertheless has the audacity to call the MP "graceless". But Fr. Dionysius does not call St. Victor an "ultra-

---

<sup>108</sup> M.E. Gubonin, *Akty Svyatejshego Tikhona, Patriarkha Moskovskogo i Vseia Rossii*, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1994, pp. 634-35

rightist”, nor the very many new Russian martyrs and confessors who shared his opinion, nor Metropolitan Philaret of Blessed Memory who likewise declared the MP to be graceless. And yet if he is not prepared to call these holy fathers “ultra-rightist”, he should withdraw that label from the contemporary zealots of Orthodoxy who assert the same thing, but on even stronger and more extensive evidence than was available to St. Victor or Metropolitan Philaret!

And yet our aim is not to establish the opinion of St. Victor or Metropolitan Philaret as expressing the infallible voice of the Church in opposition to the supposed opinion of St. John Maximovich. The essential point is that it is not the opinion of this or that father that must be accepted by all Orthodox Christians, but only *the consensus of the fathers*. Fr. Dionysius offers no compelling reason to believe that the consensus of the fathers is to be identified with his “moderate” opinion on the status of the MP, even if he could convincingly enlist St. John in his support.

So what is the consensus of the fathers on this matter? That is another question which is too large to be broached within the limits of this small article. What we can assert, however, is that God has both accepted and glorified men and women holding different opinions on the status of the MP but having in common their refusal to have any communion with the traitors who have rent apart the seamless coat of the Russian Church. There may come a time – it may have come already – when such diversity of opinion is no longer permissible. One thing is certain: labelling as “ultra rightists” the zealots of Orthodoxy in a cause for which thousands if not millions of True Orthodox Christians have already given their lives is *not* the right way to resist apostasy.

*October 25 / November 7, 1999.*

(First published in Russian in *Vertograd-Inform*, N 1 (58), January, 2000, pp. 40-42)

## **6. THE CHURCH THAT STALIN BUILT**

The Church of the living God is founded upon a most solid Rock – and that Rock is Christ (Matthew 16.18; I Corinthians 10.4). The churches of dead gods – that is, of mortals who have been raised to the status of gods by their deluded followers – are founded upon less solid and attractive materials. Thus the Roman Catholic church is founded upon the pride of the eleventh-century Pope Gregory VII, who declared that he could judge all bishops and kings, that he himself was above all judgement, and that all popes were saints by the virtue of St. Peter. The Lutheran church is founded upon the folly of the German monk Martin Luther, who married a nun and declared (very conveniently in his particular case) that good works are not necessary for salvation. The Anglican church is founded upon the lust of the English King Henry VIII, who created his own church in order to grant himself a divorce from his first wife (he married five more and killed several of them). The contemporary Ecumenical Patriarchate is founded upon the ambition of the Greek patriarch Meletius Metaxakis, a Freemason who introduced the new calendar, “deposed” Patriarch Tikhon and died, screaming that he had destroyed Orthodoxy. The contemporary Moscow Patriarchate is founded upon the cruelty and the cunning of Joseph Stalin, “the most wise generalissimo and leader of all the peoples”, but also the greatest persecutor of the Church in the history of Christianity....

Just as the True Church is created in the image and likeness of its Founder, and displays His virtues in its members, so false churches are made in the image and the likeness of those who created them, and display the characteristic vices of their founders. Thus the Moscow Patriarchate is particularly distinguished by its cruelty and its cunning. Its cruelty was particularly evident in the first decades of its existence, when the deaths of many True Orthodox Christians were caused by the denunciations of their pseudo-Orthodox “fathers” and “brothers”. Its cunning has been particularly evident in recent, post-Soviet times, when, not being able to rely on the power of the State to eliminate its rivals as “counter-revolutionaries”, it has come to rely more on clever admixtures of truth and falsehood in order to deceive the believing population. A good example of such cunning is to be found in the article, “A Church for Valentine (Rusantsov)”, by MP Priest Alexander Bragar.<sup>109</sup>

Bragar’s target is, of course, Archbishop Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir, first-hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (ROAC) and the leader of the True Orthodox, anti-patriarchal forces in Russia. However, rather than attempting to answer any of the very serious and weighty accusations that ROAC has made against the MP, or draw a comparison between Archbishop Valentine and his main ideological opponent, Patriarch

---

<sup>109</sup> “Tserkov’ dlia Valentina (Rusantsova)”, *Pravoslavnaia Suzdal’*, N 3 (13), 2000, pp. 8-9.

Alexis (Ridiger), which could only turn out to the disadvantage of Ridiger and the “church of the evil-doers”, Bragar adopts the indirect route and methods of the serpent.

One of these methods is *the misleading association of names*. For example, Bragar at one point links Archbishop Valentine with “odious personalities like Michael Ardov and Gleb Yakunin”. The highly-respected Moscow Protopriest Michael Ardov is indeed under the omophorion of Archbishop Valentine, and his frequent and impressive appearances on television and radio have evidently been a thorn in the side of the MP’s propaganda bosses. But what has he to do with Gleb Yakunin? Nothing at all. Not only does Fr. Gleb not belong to ROAC, but rather to the schismatic “Kievan Patriarchate” of Philaret Denisenko, which ROAC does not recognize: his views are quite different from Fr. Michael’s. Yakunin is a democrat: Ardov is a monarchist. Yakunin is an ecumenist: Ardov is an anti-ecumenist. So what is the purpose of linking two such different men, and both with Archbishop Valentine? *To smear Archbishop Valentine by association with the unpopular democrat and ecumenist Yakunin*. Both are opponents of the patriarchate: but there the resemblance ends. One opposes the patriarchate for one set of reasons: the other for a different set of reasons. But only a few readers will be expected to know these differences. The association has been planted in the readers’ minds, and there, it is hoped, it will fester and bring forth evil fruit...

Another well-tried method of the evil one is: divide and conquer. Thus the recent (1995) schism between ROAC and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR) is exploited for all its worth by Bragar. His history of the schism is confused and confusing – whether deliberately or not, it is difficult to tell. However, his purpose is clear: to represent Archbishop Valentine as a power-loving schismatic, whose ambition is to prevent the reunion of ROCOR with the “mother church” of the Moscow Patriarchate. As he writes: “His purpose is by all means to hinder this rapprochement, to deepen the schism in the relations between the two parts of the one Russian Orthodox Church” (p. 9).

What a revealing admission! So Archbishop Valentine and ROAC are seen by the Moscow Patriarchate as the main stumbling-block to the final apostasy of ROCOR through its union with the false church! So Archbishop Valentine stands like a contemporary St. Mark of Ephesus, whose decisive “nyet” to the unia with the contemporary eastern pope of sergianist-ecumenist papism, Alexis Ridiger, is so worrying to the latter that he must first, through his fifth columnists in ROCOR such as Archbishop Mark of Germany and Great Britain (Bragar’s praise of Mark is embarrassingly oleaginous), engineer his expulsion from ROCOR, and then, when ROCOR has been effectively neutralized and the remaining opponents of the unia have regrouped under the banner of ROAC, portray him as a traitor to the glorious traditions of ROCOR!

There are many ironies here. ROCOR, which once was “bad”, is now “good” – because its foreign hierarchs have now all adopted positions of greater or lesser compromise in relation to the MP<sup>110</sup>, and, above all, because they have fulfilled the task given them by Moscow of expelling Moscow’s most dangerous enemy from their midst. ROCOR is now “good” for another important reason: in the person of Archbishop Mark it has renounced the Catacomb Church, loyalty to which was ROOR’s raison d’être for so many years. Thus he quotes with approval Mark’s unbelievable slander: “The real Catacomb Church no longer exists. It in effect disappeared in the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s... Only individuals have been preserved from it, and in essence everything that arose after it is only pitiful reflections, and people who take what they desire for what is real.”

Even while trying to “whiten” ROCOR and “blacken” ROAC, Bragar makes some very important admissions. Thus he admits that Archbishop Mark, though a foreign bishop, created two deaneries on the territory of Russian bishops inside Russia, and that “the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR did not object” to this flagrantly uncanonical action (p. 8). Again, he admits that Bishop Barnabas of Cannes, another foreign bishop with no right to interfere in the dioceses of the Russian bishops, “considered himself the first arrival on the Russian land and decided that he had the complete right to subject to his administration all the catacombniks and the newly formed parishes on the territory of the former USSR” (p. 8). Archbishop Mark and Bishop Barnabas were Archbishop Valentine’s chief enemies and slanderers....

Again, Bragar admits that Archbishop Valentine “smelt a rat” in the “Act” that the Lesna Sobor forced him to sign in December, 1994 – and he explains why there was indeed a rat at the bottom of that barrel: “It was proposed that the parishes of ROCOR on the territory of Russia be divided into 6 dioceses, and that at the head of three of them should be placed [the newly ordained] Bishop Eutyches” (p. 9) – which meant a further invasion into the dioceses of the existing Russian bishops and the threat that *all* the parishes would be forced to re-register with the authorities, which in turn meant that the MP would be able to stop the re-registration and even demand that the parish churches be handed over to it!

An intelligent person, even one not well acquainted with the history of these events, might well draw the conclusion – the correct conclusion – from Bragar’s account that Archbishop Valentine was under concerted attack from the foreign bishops, that this attack was orchestrated by Archbishop Mark, and that his expulsion from ROCOR was perfectly in the interests of the MP.

---

<sup>110</sup> For a detailed justification of this claim, see the recent brochure issued by the former ROCOR parish in Tsaritsyn, “Sol’ obuvayet – tserkov’ perestaet byt’ tserkovyuu!” (Volgograd, 2000).

So thank you, Fr. Alexander! Unwittingly and unwillingly, you have been a witness to the truth!

And indeed the truth is more powerful than any slander or cunning. Even while under fierce attack from both the MP and ROCOR, ROAC under Archbishop Valentine continues to grow in strength. A steady stream of catacomb and former ROCOR parishes continues to join it. Many now see that ROAC is the true heir of the traditions both of the Catacomb Church inside Russia and of the true ROCOR – the ROCOR of Metropolitans Anthony, Anastasy and Philaret – outside Russia. The church built by Stalin can never prevail against the Church built by God Himself, Whose “strength is made perfect in weakness” (II Corinthians 12.9).

*June 30 / July 13, 2000.  
Synaxis of the Holy Twelve Apostles.*

(First published in *Vernost'*, N 25)



## 7. EMPIRE OR ANTICHRIST?

### 1. The Soviet Antichrist

According to the Holy Fathers, the Orthodox Christian Empire is a weapon of God defending the people of God from the Antichrist. The fall of the Christian Empire inevitably leads to the appearance of the anti-empire of the Antichrist. And so the fall of the Russian Empire and the enthronement of Soviet power in 1917 was seen by the believing Russian people as the beginning of the end of history, the enthronement of precisely – the Antichrist.

However, the renovationists and sergianists had a different point of view. The renovationists welcomed Soviet power as rescuing them from the “curse” of Tsarism and enthusiastically offered their services to it in building the “brave new world” of the socialist paradise. Consequently, they quickly fell away from the paradise of the Church and under the Church’s anathema of January, 1918 condemning all those who cooperated with Soviet power.

The sergianists did not so enthusiastically welcome Soviet power. However, they did not refuse to cooperate with it, and emphatically refused to see it as the Antichrist. This is clear from the famous interview between Metropolitan Sergius and the delegation from Petrograd led by Hieromartyr Demetrius, Archbishop of Gdov in December, 1927:

Archbishop Demetrius. Soviet power is in its basis antichristian. Is it then possible for the Orthodox Church to be in union with an antichristian state power, and pray for its successes and participate in its joys?

Metropolitan Sergius. But where do you see the Antichrist here?

Many of the more “moderate” sergianists agreed that Soviet power was an evil regime, but they refused to see in this evil anything deeper or different in principle from the evil of so many other tyrannical regimes in history. According to them, Soviet power was established by God, for “all power is from God” (Romans 13.1); it was Caesar, and the Lord said: “give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”. And so the suffering that came from it was to be endured patiently as a purification from sin.

There was an element of truth in this attitude which obscured a very dangerous lie. The truth consisted in the recognition that we are sinners, so that the suffering that comes to us in the course of our lives, whatever its source from a human point of view, is ultimately sent to us from God, in order that by enduring it patiently we may receive the forgiveness of our sins. Consequently, we cannot deny that Soviet power was a kind of punishment from God on the sinning Russian people.

But to believe that the suffering caused by Soviet power was a punishment from God is not the same as to believe that Soviet power was established by God and hence to be obeyed as “the servant of God” (Romans 13.3). On the contrary: Soviet power was established by the devil (albeit with God’s permission), and it was *not* to be obeyed, because it was the servant of the devil. There is a fundamental difference between living under a regime which is evil, but which has a certain, albeit low-level legitimacy and can be said to have been established by God, and living under a regime which is the (collective) Antichrist, having no legitimacy at all because it has been established by the devil. In the former case, it is possible, though difficult, to live a Christian life while remaining loyal to the regime: in the latter case, it is simply *not possible*. To survive as a true Christian under the regime of the Antichrist it is necessary to reject the Antichrist precisely as the Antichrist, and, in the words of Patriarch Tikhon’s famous anathema, “not to enter into any kind of communion with these outcasts of the human race”.

This difference can be better understood by comparing Soviet power with the regime of the Ottoman Turks. In 1453 the Turks came to wield power over the Christians through the destruction of the New Rome of the Byzantine Empire. As such, there was a certain logic in considering their state to be the Antichrist. However, the Orthodox Empire did not die: it was translated north to Russia, the Third Rome. Moreover, the Turks, while “antichrists” in the sense that they denied the Divinity of the Son of God, did not try and impose this antichristian faith on their Christian subjects. Even when they interfered in the elections of the Ecumenical Patriarchs, they demanded only money, not the confession of heresy. Therefore it was possible to live a fully Christian life while remaining a loyal subject of the Sultan.

However, it was a very different story in 1917. The fall of the Third Rome was not mitigated by the translation of the Empire to a fourth kingdom, and the last remnants of Orthodox monarchical statehood, in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, were overwhelmed by the Red Army. From the very beginning war was declared on Orthodox Christianity, and the whole military, political, economic, juridical and cultural apparatus of the new state was directed at forcing the Christians to accept the new faith of communism. From the time of Sergius’ declaration in 1927 nobody was allowed to exert authority in the Church unless he confessed that he identified his joys with the regime’s joys and his sorrows with the regime’s sorrows, which presupposed acceptance, not only of the Soviet state, but also *the aims* of the Soviet state.

The Bolsheviks, while paying lip-service to the separation of Church and State, in fact sought to abolish the line between them. For them, *everything* was ideological, everything had to be in accordance with their anti-theist religion, there could be no room for disagreement, no private spheres into which the state and its ideology did not pry. Most of the Roman emperors

allowed the Christians to order their own lives in their own way so long as they showed loyalty to the state (which the Christians were very eager to do). However, the Bolsheviks insisted in imposing their own ways upon the Christians in every sphere.

Thus in family life they imposed civil marriage only, divorce on demand, children spying on parents; in education - compulsory Marxism; in economics - dekulakization and collectivisation; in military service - the oath of allegiance to Lenin; in science - Darwinism and Lysenkoism; in art - socialist realism; and in religion - the ban on religious education, the closing of churches and requisitioning of valuables, the registration of parishes with the atheist authorities, the commemoration of the authorities at the Liturgy, and the reporting of confessions by the priests. Resistance to any one of these demands was counted as "anti-Soviet behaviour", i.e. *political* disloyalty. Therefore it was no use protesting one's political loyalty to the regime if one refused to accept just one of these demands. According to the Soviet interpretation of the word: "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one has become guilty of all of it" (James 2.10), such a person was an *enemy of the people*.

For the true Christian, therefore, there was no alternative except to reject the State that rejected him and everything that he valued. He was forced either to accept martyrdom or flee into the catacombs. The attempt to find a "third way" in practice always involved compromises unacceptable to the Christian conscience.

## **2. The Second World War**

Principled rejection of a State logically leads either to war against that State or to passive disobedience. The Whites in the Civil War had fought against the Soviet State because of their principled rejection of it; and the Russian Church in Exile led by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev blessed their attempt. But the attempt failed, and after the consolidation of Soviet power in the 1920s rejection of the Soviet State expressed itself, not so much in the call to arms, as in passive disobedience and non-cooperation, or, as Hieromartyr Archbishop Barlaam of Perm put it, in spiritual as opposed to physical resistance.

In this connection the words of Hieromartyr Bishop Mark (Novoselov) at his interrogation are noteworthy: "... I was not a friend of Soviet power because of my religious convictions. Insofar as Soviet power is an atheist power and even anti-theist, I consider that as a true Christian I cannot strengthen this power by any means... To it there applies a prayer which the Church has commanded us to use every day in certain conditions... The purpose of this formula is to ask God to overthrow an infidel power... But this formula does not call believers to active measures, but to pray for the overthrow of the apostate power... Churchmen are being repressed not

because of their political counter-revolutionary activity, but as bearers of the wrong ideology... The only way out for the Church in these conditions is passive resistance and martyrdom, but in no way active resistance to Soviet power".<sup>111</sup>

This criterion allowed Christians quite sincerely to reject the charge of "counter-revolution" - if "counter-revolution" were understood to mean *physical* rebellion. The problem was, as we have seen, that the Bolsheviks understood "counter-revolution" in a much wider sense...

In 1941 Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and once again the prospect of the overthrow of the power that had fallen away from God beckoned. Millions of people in the western borderlands welcomed the invaders; and there can be little doubt that from a purely religious point of view the new authority was more attractive than the Soviets. For it not only offered freedom of religion to all, including the True Orthodox Christians: it also promised the final overthrow of the hated Soviet power.

In the East, where Soviet power still ruled, the situation was more complicated. Refusal to fight "for the achievements of October" meant certain death. Some were prepared to pay that price, and they are counted among the martyrs of the Church.<sup>112</sup> The great majority, however, were prepared to fight, with a greater or lesser degree of enthusiasm, for Stalin and Soviet power. They justified this decision, in most cases, on the grounds of patriotism. Soviet power, however evil, was still "Russian", still "ours". And the enemy, as became clearer with the passing of time, was cruel and anti-Russian.

The theme of patriotism was emphasised both by the State and by the State Church of the Soviet Union, the Moscow Patriarchate. The State began to tone down its earlier rabidly anti-Russian and cosmopolitan propaganda. It was again permitted publicly to mention certain names of Russian cultural figures and even figures of religious-political history, such as Pushkin, Suvorov and St. Alexander Nevsky. In 1943 the Church, with its strong associations with Russian history and national feeling, was given a limited legitimacy in exchange for unqualified support for the State in its external and internal struggles. Metropolitan (later "Patriarch") Sergius seized upon this opportunity with enthusiasm. He issued several patriotic broadcasts on Soviet radio. And he announced a collection for the creation of a special tank column in the name of Demetrius Donskoj.

Later propagandists - even Orthodox propagandists - built on this foundation to weave a fantastic myth about the "Great Patriotic War". It became a glorious war waged, not only for Russia, but also for Orthodoxy, a

---

<sup>111</sup> Novoselov, in I.I. Osipov, "Istoria Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi po materialam sledstvennogo dela, *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 14 (1587), July 15/28, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> Schema-Monk Epiphany (Chernov), *Tserkov' Katakombnaia na Zemle Rossijskoj* (MS), 1980.

holy war that witnessed the resurrection of Holy Russia. The heroic exploit of the Russian people in this war, according to some, even wiped out the sin of its earlier support of the revolution! Stalin himself was no longer the greatest persecutor of the Church in history, but some kind of saviour, a new Constantine the Great!

The falseness of this myth is easily exposed. For the first two years of the war, before Hitler's invasion of Russia in 1941, the Soviet Union was actually fighting on Hitler's side, sharing in the division of Poland and the Baltic States. And if Hitler had not chosen to turn against his ally, there can be little doubt that Stalin would have continued to support him.

The State's exploitation of Russian national feeling was cynical in the extreme. Its continued hatred for everything truly Russian and holy was evident both during the war and immediately after it: in the killing of all prisoners in Soviet jails as the front approached, in the continued persecution of True Orthodox Christians both at home and abroad, in the imprisonment of millions of soldiers who had been prisoners-of-war under the Germans on their return home, in the imposition of communist regimes and pro-communist churches on the East European countries of Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Only extreme naivety – or a willing refusal to see the truth – could see in the imposition of militant atheism with renewed strength over a quarter of the world's surface from Berlin to Beijing as in any sense a triumph of Orthodoxy. Rather it was the fulfilment of the prophecy: "I looked and behold, a pale horse, and a rider on it whose name was death; and hell followed after it, and power was given to it over a quarter of the earth – to kill with sword and hunger, with plague and with beasts of the earth" (Revelation 6.8).

Of course, even in what seem to be the greatest triumphs of Satan the providential hand of God is to be seen; for "we know that all things work for the good for those who love God" (Romans 8.28). And there can be no doubt that the Soviet triumph had its good effects: most obviously in the destruction of Fascism and in the punishment of the Soviet regime for its unprecedented crimes of the previous decades, less obviously but even more importantly in the protection it afforded Soviet citizens for the next 45 years or so from some of the corrupting influences of western civilisation. But the recognition that God can bring good out of evil, even the greatest evil, should not lead us to praise the evil as if it were good. Thus God used the betrayal of Judas to work the salvation of the world on the Cross of Christ. But, as St. John Chrysostom explained in his homily on this event, this in no way justified Judas or saved him from eternal condemnation.

A particularly cynical attempt to justify the evil of the Soviet victory in the Second World War can be seen in the recent article entitled "Two Victories"<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> *Spetsnaz Rossii*, May, 2001.

by Egor Kholmogorov, in which the antichristian empire of the Soviet Union is raised to quasi-Christian status. The aim of Kholmogorov's article is to contrast the celebration of the victory over Nazism in 1945 in the West and in Russia. "For the West," he writes, "it was a civil war, already not the first battle in the history of western civilization between two forces presenting their expression of the western expansionist spirit. The European democracies under the patronage of the American super-democracy tried to force Nazism, the offspring of the same western civilized subconscious, back like a genie into its bottle. The basis of the western world-view is 'the survival of the fittest races in the struggle for existence', as Darwin, the spiritual father of western civilization, called his treatise. The market democracies prefer 'social' mechanisms of competitive struggle, Nazism decided to stake all on arms. It was a difference in tactics, but both tactics had been described by Machiavelli as the behaviour of the 'lion' and the 'fox': that is why May 8 is celebrated in most European capitals bashfully; they honour it somehow unwillingly."

On the other hand: "For Russia this 'feast with tears in the eyes' is above all a festival of life that had been all but completely stamped out by Hitler's jackboot on the whole expanse of Russia, and a festival of Russian destiny, from which there we can in no way escape. Confined in the chains of the ideology of 'world revolution' the Russian knight, so it would seem, would never have to act in accordance with his nature. But Hitler's sword without wishing it itself destroyed these chains to its own destruction – the Russian soldier stood out in his customary imperial role of saviour of the peoples from enraged bandits. It is not by chance that during the war the Red army both psychologically and in fact was to a large extent turned into an imperial army, with lofty self-consciousness, with an officer corps knowing the value of honour and duty, with marshal-strategists of genius. Whether Stalin wanted it or not, under his leadership Russia did not allow the West to give birth to that spectre with which it had been pregnant already for more than a thousand years, since the time of Charlemagne – the Western Empire, the Anti-empire. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, on the initiative of the Frankish emperors, Roman Catholicism broke away from Orthodoxy for the first time in order to sanctify a usurpation – the assumption by one of the German kings of the title of Roman Emperor and universal autocrat. It took several centuries to form a schism of faiths, of civilizations and of empires: more precisely, a schism from the Empire, for however hard the West tried, it did not succeed in creating a real Empire, they just couldn't pull off the theft. And then again, twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in two world wars, Russia, the heir of Rome and Byzantium, had to crush new pretenders to the creation of an anti-Roman Empire – first Kaiser Wilhelm, and then the "Third Reich" of the Nazi Führer. But since the Empire is one, and since the West just could not create anything more closely resembling the ideal than the unrestrainedly self-satisfied cowboy America, there is a hope that the Russian Idea will not remain simply a Russian idea, but a hope that it will also become English, and Spanish, and Syrian, and Mozambiquean or Chilean."

Nobody denies that the Second World War was in a certain sense a war between two opposing tendencies inherent in the post-Orthodox civilization of the West: universalism and nationalism. No Orthodox Christian will quarrel with the thesis that insofar as the democratic states were not fighting for Orthodoxy, their struggle did not have that sacred character which the wars of the Orthodox emperors had against their enemies, the pagans and heretics. But was not the Soviet Union also a product of western (and Jewish) civilization? Were its doctrines not worked out in the reading room of the British museum with the use of western sources and on the basis of almost exclusively western experience? Truly, the Second World War was a civil war, but between *three* tendencies in western civilization, not two. And each of these three tendencies was rooted in the enlightenment and anti-enlightenment ideologies of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: totalitarian nationalism (or fascism), liberal universalism (or democracy), and totalitarian universalism (or communism).

True Orthodoxy played no role in this war, and the true Orthodox Christian cannot rejoice in the spread of false "Orthodoxy" by means of Soviet tanks throughout Eastern Europe, nor at the further spread of militant atheism throughout the whole expanse of Eurasia from Berlin to Peking. Many Orthodox belonging to the Catacomb Church refused to fight on the side of one demon against another, on the side of Babylon against Egypt or of Egypt against Babylon, rejecting citizenship in any earthly state and preferring to fight only for "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6.6), the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. For they knew that Russia without her head, the God-anointed Tsar, would not be Russia, but, as St. John of Kronstadt said, "a stinking corpse", and they were not so naïve as to believe, with the Moscow Patriarchate, that Stalin was "the new Constantine".

Khomogorov's thesis is analogous to that of the Cretan historian, George Trapezuntios, who in 1466 told the Ottoman Sultan and conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmet II: "No one doubts that you are the Emperor of the Romans. Whoever is legally master of the capital of the Empire is the Emperor and Constantinople is the capital of the Roman Empire... And he who is and remains Emperor of the Romans is also Emperor of the whole earth."<sup>114</sup> However, just as Greek Orthodoxy has rejected this thesis with horror, so, and with still stronger reason, does Russian Orthodoxy reject the idea that the Soviet Union was in any way and at any time a lawful successor of the Russian Empire. Just as Julian the Apostate rejected Constantine the Great, and therefore was not his successor, so Lenin rejected (more exactly: murdered) Nicholas II, and therefore cannot be counted as his successor.

Khomogorov's thesis is thoroughly sergianist and blasphemous. Are we to

---

<sup>114</sup> Trapezuntios, in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin*, London: Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 215.

suppose that God needed the devil in order to realise His Providence! As if the most impious regime in human history – and the only one anathematized by the Orthodox Church – could lead to the Triumph of Orthodoxy! Of course, as we have already noted, Divine Providence can turn evil to good, as he turned the betrayal of Judas to the salvation of mankind. But the good here does not arise “thanks to” the evil, but in spite of it, and we are in no way permitted to thank or praise the evil because God used it for the good. And so just as we cannot rejoice at the betrayal of Judas, still less thank him for his unintended services to mankind, similarly we cannot rejoice at the victory of the Soviet Union in the Second World War (which was the “Great Patriotic” war only for those whose homeland was not Holy Russia), still less give thanks to that state which the Church of God has cursed and anathematized as being an anti-authority and anti-empire.

St. John Chrysostom used to say: “Glory to God for *all things*”. Therefore it is not only possible, but even essential, to thank God both for those temporal goods that the Soviet victory provided – for the saving of some people from death, for the preservation of the Russian language and to some degree Russian culture, - and for those longer-term benefits which are not so immediately obvious but which will become clearer as the mystery of Divine Providence reveals itself. But *only* God must be thanked, and only in giving thanks to God is there virtue and blessedness. This blessedness is immediately lost, however, when gratitude is offered to the Party and Stalin or the USSR. It is lost even if it is offered to “the Russian Liberator-People”.

Does it follow from this that it was possible to fight in the Red Army with a good conscience, without betraying Christ and His Holy Church? The answer to this question depends on the answer to the further question: is it possible to confess one’s faith in Christ while fighting for the Antichrist? It should be pointed out here it is not only the individual soldier’s private motivation which is relevant here, but also his public allegiance. In his heart the individual may believe that he is fighting, not for communism, but for Russia, or for his loved ones who are in danger of physical extermination. But to what extent can this private motivation justify him if in his public behaviour he gives every impression of fighting for Stalin and the Communist Party?

We shall not attempt to answer this question in a general sense, but shall confine ourselves to recalling the words Hieromartyr Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, in 1918: “I adjure all you, faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ, not to enter into any kind of communion with these outcasts of the human race”, and of Hieromartyr Bishop Mark (Novoselov): “By virtue of my religious convictions, insofar as Soviet power is an atheist, and even an antitheist power, I consider that as a true Christian I cannot strengthen it in any way” ...



Before leaving this theme, it is worth noting that even non-Russians and non-Orthodox Christians understood the evil of fighting on the side of the Soviet Antichrist. An Anglican priest (now an Orthodox Christian) was on a British cruiser on the Mediterranean Sea when the news came that Britain had acquired a new ally in her struggle with Nazi Germany - the Soviet Union. There was a short pause while the priest digested this news. Then he turned to his friend and said: "Until now, I thought we were fighting for God, King and Country. Now I know that we are fighting for King and Country..."

### **3. Repentance and the Triumph of Orthodoxy**

It is an axiom of Orthodoxy that the only path from evil to good is through repentance. Works without repentance cannot save; faith without repentance cannot save. For repentance is the first fruit of faith, the first work of the truly Christian conscience. This truth is more or less understood in relation to the individual Christian. But in relation to societies it is often forgotten. Few Orthodox Christians would argue that the fall of the Orthodox Empire in 1917 and its replacement by the anti-empire of the Soviets was not a terrible tragedy, a terrible sin on the collective conscience of the people. And yet many would argue that this sin can be - or already has been - washed away, not by repentance, but by patriotism, or by suffering, or simply by the passage of time. But time destroys only material, not spiritual realities; and patriotism that is not informed by, and subject to, the higher Patriotism of the Heavenly Kingdom is simply another form of fallenness. As for suffering, if accompanied by faith and repentance, as in the case of the wise thief, this does indeed wipe out sin. But if accompanied only by cursing and swearing, as in the case of the bad thief, it only leads further into hell.

The sin to be repented of here is the sin of actively supporting, or passively tolerating, the imposition of a power established by Satan in place of a power established by God. Today, more than 80 years since the tragedy, the Russian people as a whole - with the important and significant exception of the Catacomb, or True Orthodox Church - has not repented of this sin. Neither the persecutions of the 20s and 30s, nor the hot wars of the 40s, nor the cold war of the 50s to 80s, nor even the relative freedom of the 90s, has brought the people to a consciousness of what they have done. That is why its sufferings continue with no clear sign of relief on the horizon. For "If My people had heard Me, if Israel had walked in My ways, quickly would I have humbled their enemies, and upon their oppressors would I have laid My hand" (Psalm 80.12-13). Hence the words of the All-Russian Sobor on November 11, 1917 are as applicable now as they were then: "To our great misfortune, there has not so far been born a power that is truly of the people, and worthy of receiving the blessing of the Orthodox Church. And it will not appear in the Russian land until with sorrowful prayer and tears of repentance we turn to Him without Whom those who build the city labour in vain."

Regeneration is still possible, the rebirth of the Orthodox Empire is still possible. But only if the lessons of the past 80 years are learned, and the mirage of an “Orthodox Empire” that is based, not on true faith and repentance, but on pride and self-deception, is rejected finally and completely. Concerning such pseudo-empires and anti-empires we must pray to the Lord with fervour: “Let not the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee, which maketh mischief in the name of the law” (Psalm 93.20).

*Moscow.  
September 16/29, 2001.*

## **8. THE TRAGEDY OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH** **ABROAD**

*Save thyself, O Sion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.*  
Zachariah 2.7.

In 1990 communism began to collapse in Russia. The communist party gave up the monopoly position it had previously enjoyed in political life, and in March the party candidates in the main cities were routed in the first genuinely free elections in Soviet history. Still more important, a law on freedom of conscience was passed, and believers of all religions were allowed to confess their faith without hindrance.

It was as if the clock had been turned back to the period just before October, 1917, when a large measure of freedom existed under the Provisional Government. Of course, this was not the Holy Russia of the right-believing Tsars; and if the October revolution had been reversed to some degree, the same could not be said of the February revolution. But there were grounds for believing that the restoration of Holy Russia was not “beyond the mountains”.

In many respects, as we shall see, these were de jure rather than de facto changes; and it must be admitted that the spirit and power of communism was far from dead when the red flag was pulled down from over the Kremlin on December 25, 1991. Nevertheless, the changes were significant enough to indicate the beginning of a new era in Church history. If we seek for historical parallels, then perhaps the closest is that presented by the Edict of Milan in 313, when the Emperor St. Constantine the Great came to an agreement with the pagan emperor Licinius whereby the persecution of the Christians in the Roman empire was brought to an end.

Russian Orthodox Christians reacted to these changes in different ways. The True Orthodox Christians of the Catacomb Church were cautious, fearing deception, and in general remained in the underground, not seeking to register their communities or acquire above-ground churches. The Moscow Patriarchate (MP) – or “Soviet church”, as it was known among True Orthodox Christians – was fearful that its monopoly position in church life under the Soviets would be lost in the new democracy. Nevertheless, it took the opportunity presented by the new legislation to open many churches (1830 were opened in the first nine months of 1990 alone) and to receive all the money budgeted for church restoration by the Russian parliament. The third force in Russian Orthodox life, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), which throughout the Soviet period had taken a public position against the MP and in support of the True Orthodox Church, decided to open parishes on Russian soil and thereby provide an alternative for believers who on the one hand did not want to join the MP, but on the other hand were not prepared for the rigours of catacomb life.

In this article, the roots of the eventual failure of ROAC's mission will be examined, with suggestions as to how a similar failure can be avoided by her successor-church on Russian soil, the Russian Orthodox (Autonomous) Church.

\*

The return of ROCOR to Russia was undoubtedly one of the most significant events in Church history, comparable to the return of the Jews to Jerusalem after the seventy-year exile in Babylon. And yet this momentous step was taken almost casually, without sufficient forethought or a clearly defined strategy. Hence difficult problems arose, problems that ROCOR in the end found insuperable.

These problems can be divided into three categories: (A) ROCOR in relation to her own flock at home and abroad, (B) ROCOR in relation to the Catacomb Church, and (C) ROCOR in relation to the MP and the post-Soviet Russian State.

**A. ROCOR in relation to herself.** The problem here is easily stated: how could the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad continue to call herself the Church *Abroad* if she now had parishes *inside* Russia? After all, her Founding Statute or Polozhenie stated that ROCOR was an autonomous part of the Autocephalous Russian Church, that part which existed (i) *outside* the bounds of Russia on the basis of Ukaz N 362 of November 7/20, 1920 of Patriarch Tikhon and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, and (ii) *temporarily* until the fall of communism in Russia. With the fall of communism and the creation of ROCOR parishes inside Russia in 1990, it would seem that these limitations in space and time no longer applied, and that ROCOR had ceased to exist as a canonical organisation in accordance with her own definition of herself in the Polozhenie.

The solution to this problem would appear to have been obvious: change the Polozhenie! And this was in fact the solution put forward by ROCOR's leading canonist, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), who possessed unparalleled experience of ROCOR life since his appointment as Chancellor of the Synod by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev in 1931. However, the ROCOR episcopate declined that suggestion, and the Polozhenie remains unchanged to this day.

Why? Although we have no direct evidence on which to base an answer to this question, the following would appear to be a reasonable conclusion from the events as they unfolded in the early 1990s. A change in the Polozhenie that removed the spatial and temporal limitations of ROCOR's self-definition would have had the consequence of forcing the ROCOR episcopate to: (i)

remove the centre of her Church administration from America to Russia, (ii) proclaim herself (alongside any Catacomb Church groups that she might recognise) as part of the Russian Orthodox Church *inside* Russia and distinguished from the other parts only by its possessing dioceses and parishes abroad, and (iii) enter into a life-and-death struggle with the MP for the minds and hearts of the Russian people.

However, the ROCOR bishops were not prepared to accept these consequences. After all, they were well-established abroad, increasingly dependent economically on contributions from foreign converts to Orthodoxy, and with few exceptions were not prepared to exchange the comforts and relative security of life in the West for the uncertainty and privations of life in Russia (to this day ROCOR's first-hierarchy, Metropolitan Vitaly, has not set foot on Russian soil since the fall of communism, in spite of numerous invitations from believers). Of course, the whole *raison d'être* of ROCOR was to return to her homeland in Russia (she was previously called the Russian Church *in Exile*, and exiles by definition want to return to their homeland); and it was in anticipation of such a return that she had steadfastly refused to endanger her Russian identity by merging with other Local Orthodox Churches or by forming local jurisdictions identified with specific western countries (like the formerly Russian schism from ROCOR calling itself the Orthodox Church of America). But generations had passed since the first emigration, the descendants of that first emigration had settled in western countries, learned their languages, adopted their ways, put down roots in foreign soil. The exiles were no longer exiles from, but strangers to, their native land...

*Thus saith the Lord of hosts: this people saith: the time hath not come, it is not time to build the house of the Lord. And the word of the Lord came through the Prophet Haggai: But is it time for you to live in your decorated house when this House is lying waste? (Haggai 1.2-4)*

**B. ROCOR in relation to the Catacomb Church.** Since 1927, when ROCOR had broken communion simultaneously with the Catacomb Church from Metropolitan Sergius' MP, she had looked upon the Catacomb Church as the True Church inside Russia with which she remained in mystical communion of prayer and sacraments, even if such communion could not be realised in face-to-face meeting and concelebration. Indeed, after the death of Metropolitan Peter, the last universally recognised leader of the Russian Church, in 1937, ROCOR commemorated "the episcopate of the persecuted Russian Church", by which was undoubtedly meant the episcopate of the Catacomb Church. After the war, however, a change began to creep in, at first almost imperceptibly, but then more and more noticeably. On the one hand, news of Catacomb bishops and communities became more and more scarce, and some even began to doubt that the Catacomb Church existed any longer (Archbishop Mark of Berlin declared in the 1990s, when catacombniks were pouring into ROCOR, that the Catacomb Church had died out in the 1950s!).

On the other hand, some Catacomb priests inside Russia, having lost contact with, and knowledge of, any canonical bishops there might still be inside Russia, began commemorating Metropolitan Anastasy, first-hierarchy of ROCOR.

These tendencies gave rise to the not unnatural perception that the leadership of True Russian Orthodoxy had now passed from inside Russia to outside Russia, to ROCOR. Moreover, the significance of the Catacomb Church began to be lost, as the struggle was increasingly seen to be between the “red church” inside Russia (the MP) and the “white church” outside Russia (ROCOR). This condescending attitude towards the Catacomb Church was reinforced by the negative attitude taken towards most of the Catacomb clergy still alive in 1990 by Bishop Lazarus of Tambov, the bishop secretly consecrated by ROCOR in 1982 as her representative in Russia. In particular, Bishop Lazarus rejected the canonicity of the groups of Catacomb clergy deriving their apostolic succession from Bishop Seraphim (Pozdeyev), Schema-Metropolitan Gennady (Sekach) and Archbishop Anthony (Galynsky-Mikhailovsky). Basing themselves on this information, on August 2/15, 1990 the ROCOR Synod issued an ukaz, signed by Bishop Hilarion of Manhattan, rejecting the canonicity of these groups (although St. Philaret, had recognised the clergy of Archbishop Anthony in 1977 and taken several of them under his omophorion!), and declaring that they would have to seek reordination from Bishop Lazarus if they wished to be recognised by ROCOR.<sup>115</sup>

In evaluating this statement, it should be pointed out that all the Catacomb groups here excommunicated at the stroke of a pen were venerators of ROCOR, even considering her to be in some sense their “Mother Church”. Of course, it was perfectly reasonable and correct that ROCOR should first seek to check their canonical status before entering into communion with them. However, even assuming that the main canonical charge brought against them was valid (that they did not have ordination certificates, in violation of Apostolic Canon 33), the way in which they were rejected without the slightest consultation or attempt to come to some kind of agreement was harmful in the extreme.

First, the possibility of correcting the canonical anomalies of these groups in a peaceful manner and with their complete cooperation was lost.

Secondly, the news that ROCOR had rejected them produced catastrophic effects in these Catacomb groups. Thus the present writer remembers coming to a catacomb gathering in Moscow on the eve of the Feast of the Dormition, 1990. The priest entered, and instead of vesting himself for the vigil service, took off his cross in the presence of all the people, declaring: “According to ROCOR I am not a priest.” Then he immediately went to Bishop Lazarus and

---

<sup>115</sup> *Spravka iz Kantseliarii Arkhierejskogo Sinoda*, № 4/77/133, 2/15 August, 1990.

was reordained. Meanwhile, his flock, abandoned by their shepherd and deprived of any pastoral guidance, scattered in different directions...

Thirdly, the impression was created that ROCOR had come into Russia, not in order to unite with the Catacomb Church and work with her for the triumph of True Orthodoxy in Russia, but in order to *replace* her, or at most to gather the remnants of the catacombs under her sole authority. And indeed, in one declaration explaining the reasons for the consecration of Bishop Lazarus, ROCOR stated that it was in order “to regulate the church life of the Catacomb Church”.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, in the years to come the ROCOR Synod sometimes described itself as the *central authority* of the True Russian Church – in spite of the fact that this “central authority” was based, not in Russia, but thousands of miles away in New York!

ROCOR later came to believe that she had made a mistake. Thus Archbishop Hilarion wrote to the present writer: “The statement which I signed as Deputy Secretary of the Synod was based entirely on the information given to us by Archbishop Lazarus. He reported to the Synod on the different groups of the Catacombs and convinced the members of the Synod (or the Council – I don’t recall offhand which) that their canonicity was questionable and in some instances – their purity of doctrine as well (e.g. *imyabozhniki*). The Synod members hoped (naively) that this would convince the catacomb groups to rethink their position and seek from the Russian Church Abroad correction of their orders to guarantee apostolic succession. We now see that it was a mistake to issue the statement and to have based our understanding of the catacomb situation wholly on the information provided by Vl. Lazarus. I personally regret this whole matter very much and seek to have a better understanding of and a sincere openness towards the long-suffering confessors of the Russian Catacombs.”<sup>117</sup>

Such repentance was admirable, but unfortunately the fruits of it have yet to be seen. ROCOR continued to look on the humble catacombniks, serving, not in the splendid cathedrals of the emigration, but in poor, dingy flats, if not as contemptible, at any rate as unimportant. How could the Russian Church, so splendid in its pre-revolutionary glory, be resurrected on the basis of such poverty?

*Who hath remained among you that has seen this House in its former glory, and how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes as it were nothing? But take heart now... (Haggai 2.3-4)*

---

<sup>116</sup> “Zaiavlenie Arkhierejskago Sinoda Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej”, *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 18 (1423), 15/28 September, 1990, p. 6.

<sup>117</sup> Private e-mail communication, July 15, 1998.

C. ROCOR in relation to the MP. The Catacomb Church might have forgiven such arrogance if ROCOR had shown herself capable of fighting resolutely against the MP. But here the compromising tendencies developed abroad and noted above bore bitter fruit that was to lead to schism and the collapse of ROCOR's mission inside Russia. For the ROCOR bishops proved themselves incapable of making up their minds whether the MP was their bitterest enemy or their most beloved mother, whether it was necessary to fight her or help her!<sup>118</sup>

The roots of this indecisiveness go back to the post-war period, when large numbers of Christians fleeing towards Western Europe from Soviet Russia were joined to ROCOR. In receiving these Christians, little difference was made between those who had belonged to the Catacomb Church, and those who had belonged to the MP. Some, even including bishops, turned out to be KGB agents, and either returned to the MP or remained as "moles" to undermine ROCOR.<sup>119</sup> Others, while sincerely anti-Soviet, were not sufficiently "enchurched" to see the fundamental ecclesiological significance of the schism in the Russian Church. Thus a certain "dilution" in the quality of those joining ROCOR in the second emigration by comparison with the first – and the problem was to get worse with the third and fourth emigrations of the 70s, 80s and 90s – began to affect the confessing stance of the Church as a whole. Even members of the first emigration were proving susceptible to deception: over half of the Church in America and all except one diocese in China (that of Shanghai, led by St. John Maximovich) were lured back into the arms of the Soviet "Fatherland" and its Soviet "Church".

Another reason for this diminution in zeal proceeded from the fact that ROCOR did not break communion with the Local Orthodox Churches of "World Orthodoxy" even after all of these (except Jerusalem) sent representatives to the local Councils of the MP in 1945 and 1948. The reasons for this depended on the Church in question. Thus communion continued with the Serbian Church because of the debt of gratitude owed to the hospitality shown by the Serbian Church to ROCOR in the inter-war years. Communion continued with the Jerusalem Patriarchate because all churches in the Holy Land, including the ROCOR monasteries, were required, under threat of closure, to commemorate the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Communion also continued, albeit intermittently, with the Greek new calendarist churches, because the Patriarchate of Constantinople was powerful in the United States, the country to which ROCOR moved its headquarters after the war.

This ambiguous relationship towards "World Orthodoxy" in general inevitably began to affect ROCOR's zeal in relation to the MP in particular.

---

<sup>118</sup> See Fr. Timothy Alferov, "O polozhenii rossijskikh prikhodov RPTsZ v svete itogov patriarkhijnogo sobora", *Uspensij Listok*, № 34, 2000.

<sup>119</sup> This forced the ROCOR Synod to take special measures to "ferret out" potential spies. See Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), *Pis'ma*, Moscow, 1999.



For if the MP was recognised by Serbia and Jerusalem, and Serbia and Jerusalem were recognised by ROCOR, the conclusion was drawn that the MP, while bad, was still a Church. And this attitude in turn affected ROCOR's attitude towards the Catacomb Church, which was no longer seen by many, including several of the bishops, as the only true Church in Russia, but rather as a brave, but not entirely canonical organisation or collection of groupings which needed to be "rescued" by ROCOR before it descended into a form of sectarianism similar to that of the Old Ritualists.

As ROCOR began to lose confidence in herself and the Catacomb Church as the *only* bearers of true Russian Orthodoxy, the accent began to shift towards the preservation, not of Orthodoxy as such, but of *Russianness*. This was bound to fail as a weapon against the MP. For for a foreign Church, however Russian in spirit, to claim to be more Russian than the Russians inside Russia was bound to be perceived as arrogant and humiliating (especially in the mouth of an ethnic German such as Archbishop Mark of Berlin!). And so, after the need to display a specifically Soviet patriotism fell away in the early 90s, the MP was able to mount a successful counter-attack, claiming for itself the mantle of "Russianness" as against the "American" church of ROCOR.

As a result of all this, at the very moment that ROCOR was called by God to enter into an open war with the MP for the souls of the Russian people on Russian soil, she found herself tactically unprepared, hesitant, unsure of her ability to fight this great enemy, unsure even whether this enemy was in fact an enemy and not a potential friend, sister or even "mother". And this attitude guaranteed the collapse of the mission. For "if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will rise up and prepare for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14.8). Looking more at her enemies than at the Lord, she began, like the Apostle Peter, to sink beneath the waves. And the MP which, at the beginning of the 90s had been seriously rattled, recovered her confidence and by the middle of the 90s had recovered her position in public opinion.

*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who are thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel? You shall become a plain... (Zachariah 4.6-7).*

\*

The problems began on May 3/16, 1990, when the ROCOR Synod issued a statement that was in general strongly anti-MP, but which contained the qualification that there might be true priests dispensing valid sacraments in the patriarchate nevertheless. The idea that there can be true priests in a heretical church is canonical nonsense (Apostolic Canon 46), and Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) immediately obtained the removal of the offending phrase. But the damage had been done.

Worse was to follow. Bishops and priests visiting Russia from abroad often showed an extraordinary inability to distinguish between the true Church and the false. Thus Archbishop Lavr, on visiting a village in which there existed a ROCOR priest, chose instead to stay with the local MP priest! Another bishop proposed entering into union with the Ukrainian samosvyaty and the fascist organization "Pamyat"! A third shared some holy relics with – the MP Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk (KGB agent "Ostrovsky")!

The veneration shown by some foreign ROCOR clergy for the MP was very difficult to understand for Russian believers, for whom ROCOR represented purity and light in the surrounding darkness, and who thought that ROCOR's mission in Russia was to rescue them from the MP.

Still more shocking was the way in which visiting ROCOR bishops publicly slandered their colleagues in Russia. Thus Archbishop Mark of Germany publicly called Bishop Valentine (Rusantsov) of Suzdal, the most active and successful of the newly ordained Russian bishops, "a wolf in sheep's clothing". Then, - together with Bishop Barnabas of Cannes, who in 1992 had been appointed, completely uncanonically, as the Synod's representative in Russia with authority over all its parishes there, - Mark proceeded to do everything in his power to undermine the very constructive work of Vladyka Valentine.

Later it became clear who was the wolf. In 1997 Archbishop Mark had a secret meeting with "Patriarch" Alexis. Soon after, with the very active support of Mark, the "patriarch" took over ROCOR's monastery in Hebron, Israel. Could all this be linked, wondered believers, with the fact that in 1979 Mark was detained at Leningrad airport for more than 24 hours for the possession of anti-Soviet literature, and was then released unharmed, claiming that "nothing had happened"?<sup>120</sup>

The destructive work of Archbishop Mark and Bishop Barnabas elicited a series of protests from the episcopate within Russia. But no reply came. Eventually, in order to protect their own flocks from this invasion by supposed "friends" and "colleagues" from abroad, the Russian bishops were forced to form their own autonomous Higher Church Administration, on the basis of the same patriarchal ukaz no. 362 which had formed the basis for ROCOR's formation as an independent Church body in the 1920s. At this point (1994), the writing was already on the wall for ROCOR in Russia. If she

---

<sup>120</sup> Retired KGB Colonel Constantine Preobrazhensky has recently accused Mark of having been enrolled in the KGB at precisely that time. Moreover, Agent Arndt helps "the organs" "to subject the Church Abroad to Moscow, so as to take control of the Russian emigration" ("Dve Tajny arkhiepiskopa Marka", *Portal-credo*, 12 May, 2004). Archbishop Mark immediately responded: "I have never and nowhere been arrested, and I will not comment on every absurdity".

repulsed even the most loyal and successful of her leaders on Russian soil, treating them as enemies and traitors, how could she claim to be the leader of True Russian Orthodoxy anywhere in the world?

At the Lesna Sobor in November, 1994, the Russian bishops Lazarus and Valentine made a last despairing effort to restore unity with the bishops abroad. Unity was restored, but only for a short time. In February, 1995, seizing on some false information provided by Bishop Evtikhy, the ROCOR Synod banned five of the Russian bishops, expelling them from their midst without even an investigation or trial. The banned bishops had no choice but to resurrect their autonomous administration – but this time not in communion with ROCOR. And so there came into being the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, whose task was to gather together what remained of ROCOR's mission in Russia and start the rebuilding process, with a clear strategy and a well-defined, strictly canonical attitude towards the MP.

As the Scripture says, pride goes before a fall. The fall of the ROCOR's position in Russia, which was confirmed by the catastrophic Sobor of October, 2000, was the result of pride – pride in her own past virtues, pride in relation to the other bearers of True Russian Orthodoxy, pride in her ability and right to claim the leadership of the whole of Russian Orthodoxy. The tragedy of ROCOR's failure by no means excludes the possibility of a recovery. But that recovery must now come from within Russia, and not from abroad. And must it come with a full understanding of the causes of the past failures, and a determination not to repeat them.

*And the Lord said to satan: the Lord rebuke thee, O satan, the Lord rebuke thee Who hast chosen Jerusalem! Is this not it a brand plucked from the fire? (Zachariah 3.2)*

*Moscow.  
October 9/22, 2001.*

## 9. IN SEARCH OF NEVER-LOST RUSSIA

### Introduction

In his article, “In Search of Lost Byzantium”, Hieromonk Gregory (Lourié) has argued that “in Synodal Russia a special *teaching* on the Church was formed that does not conform with the patristic one. This teaching – already to be found in the edition of Theophan Prokopovich or Philaret Drozdov, *and not only Sergius Stragorodsky* – cannot be theologically qualified in any other way than as ecclesiological *heresy*. The essence of this heresy does not lie in the idea of submitting the Church to some especially bad secular power, but in the very idea of making the Church administration a part of the State administration. This denies the idea of the Church as an unearthly (precisely a theanthropic) ‘organization’, albeit dwelling on the earth, and in this way we really have in this conception the ecclesiological analogue of Arianism, in the bosom of which this conception was born.”<sup>121</sup>

In this short paragraph Fr. Gregory accuses the whole of the Russian Church since the time of Peter the Great’s *Spiritual Regulation* (1721) of ecclesiological heresy, the same heresy as that proclaimed by Sergius Stragorodsky and the Sovietised Moscow Patriarchate from 1927 and known by the Orthodox under the name of *Sergianism*.<sup>122</sup>

“Let us recall,” he writes, “that all the decrees of the Synod, including the ordination of bishops, necessarily began with the formula: ‘By order of His Imperial Majesty the Most Holy Governing Synod has commanded...’ – and compare this formula with the text of the canon (the 30<sup>th</sup> of the Holy Apostles): ‘If any bishop acquires Episcopal power in the Church by the use of secular bosses, let him be defrocked and excommunicated, and all those who gather together with him’...

“Thus the whole Russian hierarchy, and, through it, all the clergy, was subject to defrocking and complete excommunication from the Church. Of course, ‘is subject to’ defrocking and excommunication and ‘is’ defrocked and excommunicated are not one and the same thing. But it is absolutely clear that the system of ‘ecclesiastical’ administration based on the criminal (from a canonical point of view) *principle* can in no way put into practice a real Church administration... This means that in Synodal Russia a special *teaching* on the Church was formed which did not conform with the patristic teaching.”

---

<sup>121</sup> Lourié <http://www.russ.ru/politics/meta/20010618-lour.html> (italics in original). All quotations are from this work unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>122</sup> In another place, Fr. Gregory writes: “I will not link sergianism as an ecclesiological heresy particularly with the name of Sergius Stragorodsky” (“Sergianism: a parasynagogue changing into a schism”), Unofficial web-forum of ROAC, <http://web.referent.ru/nvc/forum/0/co/BC415C9E/179> (07/08/01).

We shall not dispute the judgement that Peter the Great's abolition of the patriarchate and introduction of the *Regulation* was both anti-canonical and deeply harmful to the Church. Instead, the following three questions are posed: (1) Was the theory and practice of the Russian Church as sharply different from the Byzantine theory and practice as Fr. Gregory claims? (2) Did this distortion of Church-State relations produced by the *Regulation* constitute an ecclesiological *heresy* or simply a violation of the canons? and (3) Is Fr. Gregory's own theory of Church-State relations patristic? Since the last question is the most fundamental, we shall begin with it.

### **1. Fr. Gregory's Political Manichaeism**

Fr. Gregory's attempt to prove that the Russian Church fell into ecclesiological heresy centuries before the revolution proceeds from his general understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world. Briefly put, his idea amounts to the belief that the Church as such is an exclusively heavenly organism and therefore she must in no way be drawn into earthly politics, nor submit in any way to the influence of earthly rulers. The Church is not of this world whereas the State is of this world, so there can be no real meeting between them even in the best case, that is, in the case of "symphony" with an Orthodox ruler. "At the base of *symphony* (which literally means 'agreement'), there lies the idea of the ontological distinction between the Empire and the Church... In the Church as an earthly organization there is really present the Church as the Body of Christ... But in the Empire there is nothing of the sort: it, by contrast with the Church, does not contain within itself the *reality* of the Heavenly Kingdom."

We may call this idea *political manichaeism*. It is closely linked in Fr. Gregory's writings with *sexual manichaeism*, the idea that marriage (unless it is virginal) is not part of the reality of the New Testament. Neither marriage nor politics are occupations of the True Christian, who lives, not according to the law, but by grace.<sup>123</sup>

Fr. Gregory's sexual manichaeism has been discussed by the present writer in other works.<sup>124</sup> Here attention is concentrated on his *political* manichaeism. And we may agree immediately that earthly politics very often *is* dirty. In no sphere of human life, perhaps, is it more difficult to avoid serious sin. Therefore the Church jealously guards her independence from earthly rulers, as expressed above all in the famous 30<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon.

However, the Church is *both* "heavenly" *and* "earthly", and the heavenly and earthly aspects of her existence cannot be radically separated, any more

---

<sup>123</sup> Lourié, *Prizvanie Avraama*, St. Petersburg, 2000 (in Russian).

<sup>124</sup> See Protopriest Michael Makeev, Vladimir Moss, Anton Ter-Grigorian, Ilia Grigoriev, *Supruzhestvo, Blagodat' i Zakon*, Moscow, 2001.

than the soul and the body. The very attempt to do this is dangerous. After all, the separation of the soul from the body is the definition of death. Besides, what *is* politics if not human life on the broadest, most public scale? And who would dare to say that the Church cannot touch this sphere of life also with her grace?

According to Fr. Gregory (at this point he refers to St. Methodius of Olympus, but without any quotations), the relationship of the Church to the world is one of co-existence, no more: 'The Church of the New Testament wanders in the desert of the world, accomplishing her New Exodus into the promised land – the life of the future age, which is the eighth millennium of years, that is, eternity. The whole history of the world is six thousand years of creation. While this history is continuing, the New Testament church has already departed beyond its borders, and therefore for the Church herself (but not for the world around her!) the seventh millennium has already come – the thousand-year Kingdom about which the Apocalypse speaks (Revelation 20.4); this is also eternity, but it is distinguished from the eighth millennium in that it continues to coexist with the world.'

In fact, however, the relationship of the Church and the world, including politics, was always closer than that, even when the Roman empire was still pagan. Thus as early as the second century, write Fathers Dionysius and Timothy Alferov, St. Melito of Sardis, a disciple of St. John the Theologian, "foreseeing the inevitable union of the Church and the empire, turned to the emperor and proved to him all the beneficial effects of Christianity for the State. [Moreover,] we see many Christians among the soldiers, including the most brilliant, who accepted martyrdom for refusing to sacrifice to the idols and renounce the faith, but not at all for desertion, nor for defeatist propaganda, nor for spying, nor for blatant pacifism. Saints George the victory-bearer, Andrew the General, Great-Martyr Procopius, Theodore the General and many others, without doubting served the Roman State and Emperor with their sword."<sup>125</sup>

If the early Christians served the pagan Emperor with such zeal, it is hardly surprising that the relationship should have become closer when the Emperor became a Christian. And indeed, why should the Church not have cooperated with the Emperor (and not only "co-existed" with him), when the Emperor himself helped the Christians to fulfil the commandments of God? After all, St. Constantine punished the persecutors of Christianity, built churches, convened Christian councils to protect the Church from heresy and schism, raised the status of priests, freed Christians from working on Sundays, equipped and defended Christian missions...

The Protestants, however, declare that the Church "lost her purity" when she entered into union with the Christian Empire. According to them, with

---

<sup>125</sup> Alpherov, O Tserkvi, Pravoslavnom Tsarstve i Poslednie Vremena, Moscow, 1998, p. 10.

the conversion of St. Constantine it was not the Empire that became Christian, but the Church that became pagan. It simply substituted quantity for quality, a large number of mediocre Christians for the little flock of the true Christians.

Fr. Gregory has a similar idea, but in a more Judaising form. The Imperial Church was not a mass of nominal, semi-pagan Christians, but a mixture between the "elite" New Testament Christians and the mass of seeming, Old Testament "Christians". The grace of the Church is for the elite, and the laws of the State – inescapably Old Testament in form and spirit – for the mass. Thus he writes: "Some complication of the structure was inevitable with any increase in the number of Christians. The question was only: did the given complication correspond to the Christian teaching?"

"The 'pre-imperial' Christian society was reminiscent of a comet: those who chose the New Testament path of life constituted its fiery core, as it were, and the rest – its comparatively diffusely scattered tail, which sometimes became shorter (in times of persecution), and sometimes longer (in times of peace. In the conditions of the Christian Empire, that which used to be the 'tail' was converted into a solid, thick atmosphere..."

"The problems of regulating the relations between the elements of this 'atmospheric layer' began to be decided in the only possible way – within the bounds of the civil legislation. There arose a new organization, the civil society of Christians, and this organization was not a matter of indifference for the Church. The Church had to guarantee its life in accordance with the life of the Old Testament. But not only that. A new system of legislation was also required, a system that described (albeit partially) the life of the New Testament as a social institution – and this became institutionalized monasticism.

"In the earthly Church there are two paths of life, the Old Testamental and the New Testamental, while the door from the lower to the higher must always be kept open and known to all. For this there was also created that description of the external contours of New Testamental life – it goes without saying, only the contours, and not the life itself, – which turned into the special institution of Christian monasticism, which was taken account of in both the ecclesiastical and the secular legislation..."

"And so the two forms of Christian life, lay and monastic, corresponded to the ever-existing, pre-Christian alternatives of the Law and Grace. These alternatives also exist in Christian society, where both possible paths of life need each other: the Old Testamental needs the New Testamental as its aim, without which it would have no meaning, while the New Testamental needs the Old Testamental as its preparation, without which nobody would be able to receive it. If Christian society becomes larger and – the most important thing – not very 'diffuse' (that is, if its 'Old Testamental' part does not fall

away from the Church too often or in too large a proportion; it is precisely those conditions that are provided by the Christian Empire), then the two paths of life need corresponding legislation. With this no antagonism arises between the two parts of Christian society: they need each other as before.”<sup>126</sup>

This teaching is more than “Christian” elitism, which violates, apart from anything else, the spirit and the letter of the canons of the Council of Gangra on marriage. It constitutes *ecclesiological heresy*. There are not *two* paths of life in the Church, one New Testamental and the other Old Testamental. There is only one: the path of the New Testament, by which both monastics and married Christians live. The fact that both marriage and the kingdom existed already in the Old Testament does not mean that they must abolish themselves at the appearance of the New. On the contrary: they are filled with a new content, acquire a new aim, become wholly new through the sacraments of the New Testament. The Judaizing idea that Christians can continue to live according to the law of the Old Testament was anathematized by the holy Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians: “Ye who seek to justify yourselves by the law are left without Christ, ye have fallen away from grace” (5.4).

As regards Fr. Gregory’s teaching that the Empire as it were helped the “Old Testamental” part of Christian society, “the diffuse tail of the comet”, “not to fall away from the Church too often or in too large a proportion”, there is a certain measure of truth in this. Truly, the Empire gave its subjects the opportunity to learn Christian doctrine and go to church freely, without fear of persecution, which helped the less strong Christians not to fall away from the Church. But this role cannot be called “Old Testamental”, nor can the weaker members of the Church be called “the Old Testamental part of society”. On the contrary, the help which the Christian Empire gave the weaker Christians was in the highest degree “*New Testamental*”. So not without reason were the true Christian Emperors called “pastors” and even “bishops” (in the sense of overseers of the Christian flock), as, for example, in the epistle of Pope Gregory II to the iconoclast emperor Leo the Isaurian...

But is it true that “the New Testamental part of Christian society”, as being “the fiery core of the comet”, did not need the service of the Christian emperors? Hardly. For if so, why did St. Sabbas the Sanctified appeal for help to the Emperor Justinian? And why did Egyptian monasticism truly flourish only after the Christianization of the Empire? And Russian monasticism reach its apogee only under the Great Princes of Kiev and Moscow? And why did the quenching of monasticism so often coincide with the fall or spiritual weakening of the Orthodox kingdoms: Russian monasticism with the westernizing tsars and tsarinas of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Greek monasticism with the heterodox Bavarian kings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Orthodox monasticism everywhere under the communist and democratic regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

---

<sup>126</sup> Lourié, *Prizvanie Avraama*, op. cit., pp. 158-159.



The spiritual distance between the desert and the royal palace is less, and their interdependence greater, than one might expect. The emperors often sought the prayers of the monks, and the monks – the support of the emperors. Of course, the best Christians can remain faithful to Christ in conditions of the greatest anarchy and persecution. But *all* Christians pray “for the kings... that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life” (I Timothy 2.2), which is a priceless gift for *all*.

Therefore there are no more tragic moments in the history of the Church than the fall of the Three Romes in 476, 1453 and 1917. “It could not be otherwise,” writes St. John Maximovich. “He who united everything, standing on guard for the truth, was overthrown. Sin was accomplished, opening the path for sin...”<sup>127</sup>

Fr. Gregory writes: “There is no difference in principle between the State of the People of God in the form of the Christian Empire and the same State in its Old Testament form – the State whose basic laws were given by Moses long before its own coming into existence... The law of Moses remains the basis also of Christian secular legislation”.<sup>128</sup>

This is not true. The foundation of Christian secular legislation was *not the law of Moses, but the Gospel of Christ*. If “the list of the basic [Old Testament] laws enters into the Byzantine canonical collections, including the Slavonic *Rudder*”, as Fr. Gregory says,<sup>129</sup> this unquestionably took second place to the specifically Christian content of those collections – the dogmas and decrees of the Ecumenical and Local Councils of the Orthodox Church. Moreover, significant parts of the Old Testament law – everything that relates to rites, circumcision, animal sacrifices, etc. – found no place in the Christian collections. The Christian Emperor’s first duty was the defence of Christian dogma; and from the time of Justinian it was specifically asserted that no law which contradicted the Holy Dogmas and Canons had any legal force (*Novella* 131). The best Christian rulers always tried to incarnate the spirit of Christianity through Christian laws. And they succeeded: “Through him we have become deified, we have known the true life,” said Metropolitan Hilarion of Kiev about the holy equal-to-the-apostles Great Prince Vladimir. But how was it possible for the Russians to know the true life in God through St. Vladimir if he stood at the head of an Old Testament institution, distributing only the deadness of the Old Testament law?

Fr. Gregory writes: “According to Byzantine tradition, which was formed already during the course of the fourth century, the power of the Christian

---

<sup>127</sup> St. John, “Sermon before a pannikhida to the Tsar-Martyr”, *Arkhiyeiskop Ioann, Molitvennik i Podvizhnik*, San-Francisco, 1991, p. 125.

<sup>128</sup> Lourié, *Prizvanie Avraama*, p. 155.

<sup>129</sup> Lourié, *Prizvanie Avraama*, p. 155.

Emperor exists temporarily, until the Second Coming of Christ. It was thereby recognized that in the Christian Empire there ruled laws (albeit God-inspired ones) and an Emperor (albeit God-crowned), but not Christ Himself directly. But in this way it turns out that the Christian monarch led the Empire precisely to the New Testament, after the reception of which the monarchy itself would have to abolish itself... As was fitting for an Old Testament institution, the Christian Empire prepared to give way to the life of the New Testament..."<sup>130</sup>

However, the life of the New Testament does not begin with the Second Coming of Christ, but with the First. And the Christian Empire will not give way to the life of the New Testament, but itself participates in it immediately and directly, *on this side* of the resurrection of the dead. And if the power of the Christian Emperor exists only temporarily, this power is nevertheless sacred and includes in itself the unfading, immortal grace of God, which unites it unto the ages with the power of the King of kings in the heavens... Moreover, it can hardly be coincidental that St. Constantine himself was baptised at the Feast of Pentecost, 337 as if to emphasise that the grace of Pentecost had now finally overcome the last and most stubborn bastion of the pagan world, the institution of the imperator-pontifex maximus, and had enlightened him to become "equal of the apostles".

## **2. Fr. Gregory and the Symphony of Powers**

In his search for proofs that the Christian Emperor is by his post not inside the Church, but outside her, Fr. Gregory rejects the conception of the Emperor as an earthly icon of the Heavenly King. And he undermines the classical conception of the symphony of powers. Let us study this more closely.

Soon after Pentecost and the founding of the Church, the apostles said: "It is not good for us to abandon the word of God and worry about tables" (Acts 6.2), and ordained seven deacons, so that they should care for the material needs of the Church. Similarly, in the fourth century the Church entrusted the Christian Emperor with "worrying about tables" – that is, the punishment of criminals, the waging of wars against pagans, the collection of taxes, the guaranteeing of a minimal level of material prosperity. In recognition of this, the Byzantine Church gave the Emperor a rank within the Church equivalent to that of deacon.<sup>131</sup>

However, the *real* power and obligations of the Orthodox Emperor in the Church far exceeded the power and obligations of any deacon. Moreover, they related not only to the material needs of his subjects, but also to their deepest spiritual needs. Thus the Fathers of the First Council welcomed the Emperor as follows: "Blessed is God, Who has chosen you as king of the

---

<sup>130</sup> Lourié, *Prizvanie Avraama*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>131</sup> M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw, 1931, vol. I, pp. 133, 139.

earth, having by your hand destroyed the worship of idols and through you bestowed peace upon the hearts of the faithful... On this teaching of the Trinity, your Majesty, is established the greatness of your piety. Preserve it for us whole and unshaken, so that none of the heretics, having penetrated into the Church, might subject our faith to mockery... Your Majesty, command that Arius should depart from his error and rise no longer against the apostolic teaching. Or if he remains obstinate in his impiety, drive him out of the Orthodox Church." As A. Tuskarev observes, "this is a clear recognition of the divine election of Constantine as the external defender of the Church, who is obliged to work with her in preserving the right faith, and in correspondence with the conciliar sentence is empowered to drive heretics out of the Church".<sup>132</sup> In recognition of this, the Byzantine Church allowed the Emperor to vest in vestments similar to those of a *bishop*.

Was the Emperor in fact a "bishop" in some sense? In his *Life of Constantine*, Eusebius Pamphilus, the arianizing bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, wrote that Constantine, "like a general bishop established by God, united the servants of God in Councils", and that he called himself "bishop of those outside the Church" while "you are bishops of those inside the Church". That is, he was not a bishop in the proper, liturgical and sacramental sense, but in the sense that he "oversaw [επεσκοπεῖ] all the subjects of the Empire" and led them to piety.<sup>133</sup>

In accordance with this conception, Eusebius said of the Christian Emperor that "the kingdom with which he is invested is an image of the heavenly one. He looks up to see the archetypal pattern and guides those whom he rules below in accordance with that pattern."<sup>134</sup> "The ruler of the whole world is the second Person of the All-Holy Trinity – the Word of God, Who is in everything visible and invisible. From this all-embracing Reason the Emperor is rational, from this Wisdom he is wise, from participation in this Divinity he is good, from communion with this Righteousness he is righteous, in accordance with the idea of this Moderation he is moderate, from the reception of this highest Power he is courageous. In all justice one must call a true Emperor him who has formed his soul with royal virtues, according to the image of the Highest Kingdom".<sup>135</sup>

Fr. Gregory rejects the teaching of Eusebius as follows: "According to Eusebius both the (Christian) Empire and the Church are 'icons' of the Heavenly Kingdom. The head of the Empire is the Emperor, who is himself an 'icon' of Christ. Hence it is evident that the Emperor is both the head of the Church on the universal (but not on the local) levelscale. It goes without

---

<sup>132</sup> Alferov, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>133</sup> Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, I, 44; 4, 24.

<sup>134</sup> Eusebius, *Oration in Honour of Constantine*.

<sup>135</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*.

saying that we are talking about the Church on earth. This is the conception which lay at the base of Byzantine 'Caesaropapism'".

"Hence it is evident..." But it is *not* evident. From the fact that the Emperor is the head of the Empire it does *not* follow that he is also the head of the Church on the universal level. The Emperor is the head of all Christians in the political sphere, as the episcopate as a whole is the head of all Christians in the spiritual sphere. If the Emperor is more powerful in the State than any individual bishop in the Church, this reflects the different natures of the Church and the State, their asymmetry, but it by no means follows from this that the Emperor must impose both the structure of the State, and himself as the head of the State, on the Church as her head.

Fr. Gregory continues: "It is important to understand what in these theological presuppositions was Arian... Of course, the most important thing was the whole subordinationist perspective created by Arianism: God (the Father) – then (that is, lower down) the Son (considered as a creature) – and still further down, the Church. But secondly, the ontological abysses between all three levels of this hierarchy: between God and the Son, between the Son as the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1.15), and the Church as a creature. Yes, these levels are linked between themselves by projection (the lower here is always an image of the higher), but Eusebius' teaching on the 'image' does not presuppose any ontological communion between that which is different by nature..."

"In this situation there can be no teaching about the Church as the Body of Christ in the most literal, physical sense – the Body whose life even on earth takes place in eternity. Correspondingly, the teaching on the Church's otherworldliness, her 'wandering' and Exodus in the wilderness of this world, is also lost. Ontologically the Church is equated (with some qualifications) with another completely earthly organization of Christians – the Empire."

As so often with Fr. Gregory, here much is asserted with minimal proof. But the most important question for us is not: is his description of Eusebius' teaching accurate? but: is the conception of the Christian Emperor as an icon of the Heavenly King necessarily linked with Arianism? The answer to this is clear: *no*. Thus the completely Orthodox St. Cyril of Alexandria wrote to the Emperor Theodosius II (who convened the Third Ecumenical Council): "In truth, you are a certain image and likeness of the Heavenly Kingdom".<sup>136</sup>

Turning now to the conception of the Symphony of Powers, the Empire and the Priesthood, as classically expressed in Justinian's *Sixth Novella*, Fr. Gregory finds himself in agreement with the conception, and recognizes that it contains within itself the idea of the Empire as an image of the Heavenly

---

<sup>136</sup> Quoted by Sergius and Tamara Fomin, *Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem*, Sergiev Posad, vol. I, p. 72.

Kingdom. But he insists that the Empire and the Church are “images” of the Heavenly Kingdom in different senses: “At the base of the symphony (which literally means ‘agreement’) there lies the idea of the ontological difference between the Empire and the Church (albeit taken only within the bounds of the earthly organization). Both the Church and the Empire are ‘images’ of the Heavenly Kingdom (which is why Eusebius never ceases to be topical, but is only reinterpreted), but they are not ‘images’ in one and the same sense. In the Church as an earthly organization there is really present the Church as the Body of Christ – but this is not simply an image, but the very reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. But in the Empire there is nothing of the sort: it, by contrast with the Church, does not contain within itself the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. If we can compare the Empire with an icon of the Heavenly Kingdom painted in oils, then the Church on earth must correspond to the Eucharist. Only on the basis of such a delimitation can the possibility of a symphony between the Church and the Empire arise. Hence the principles of the autonomy of their inner structures, legislation, etc.”

There can be no argument: the Church and the Empire are ontologically different, if only because not all the subjects of the Empire are members of the Church, and not all the members of the Church are subjects of the Empire. But what if the boundaries of the Church (albeit taken only within the bounds of the earthly organization) and the boundaries of the Empire coincided? Would this not be the fulfillment of the prophecy: “The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He will reign unto the ages of ages” (Revelation 11.15)? Of course, the difference between the Empire and the Priesthood would remain. But it would be impossible to say then, when God has become “all in all”, that the Empire “by contrast with the Church, does not contain within itself the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven”.

It goes without saying that this vision represents an ideal. But in a theological ideal we contemplate the possibilities of reality, its ontological essence and depth. And it is on the basis of such a possibility of the *union* of the Church and the Empire, and not – or not only – on the basis of their *delimitation*, that “the possibility of the *symphony* of Church and Empire arises”.

Correspondingly, the Holy Scriptures and Patristic Tradition underline the similarity of the partners in the symphony of powers. Thus the Emperor and the Hierarch are “the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth” (Zechariah 4.14). They are like “two olive trees” communicating His grace to the Christian people (Zechariah 4.3). Of the one it is written: “He shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear royal honour, and shall sit upon his throne” (Zechariah 6.13). And of the other it is written: “And there shall be a priest by his throne, and peaceful understanding shall be between them both” (Zechariah 6.14).

Fr. Gregory still insists on a more radical difference, not two olive trees in the House of the Lord, but one inside and one out: "It is absolutely correct to say that the Emperor is – according to his post, but not as a person – *outside* the organization of the Church. The classical text is the *Sixth Novella* of the holy Emperor Justinian, which simultaneously has the significance of ecclesiastical and secular law." However, Justinian's *Sixth Novella* says that the Kingdom and the Priesthood "proceed from one source", that is, God. And the *Seventh Novella* declares: "The difference between the priesthood and the Empire is small". Therefore, as Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes, "The Church and the State constitute as it were one whole, one organism in a single service to the work of God, albeit 'unconfusedly', nevertheless 'inseparably'".<sup>137</sup>

Another classical text, the *Epanagoge* of St. Photius the Great, states: "The State is constituted of parts and members like an individual person. The greatest and most necessary parts are the Emperor and the Patriarch. Therefore unanimity in everything and symphony (συμφωνία) between the Kingdom and the Priesthood (constitutes) the spiritual and bodily peace and prosperity of the subjects" (*Titulus III*, 8). And so, like the soul and body of a man, the Kingdom and the Priesthood are created from different substances and have different functions, but constitute parts of a single organism. And if the *Epanagoge* calls this organism "the State", and not "the Church", this only goes to prove how closely related these concepts were in the consciousness of the Byzantines. For, as Patriarch Anthony IV wrote in 1393: "The Empire and the Church are in a close union and communion between each other, and it is impossible to separate the one from the other."

As Professor A.V. Kartashev writes: "The hierarchy of the relationships between spirit and flesh, and therefore also of the Church and the State, has its foundation in the creation itself. Just as the body must be the obedient and perfect instrument of the spirit, so the State is ideally thought of as the obedient and perfect instrument of the Church, for it is she that knows and reveals to mankind its higher spiritual aims, pointing the way to the attainment of the Kingdom of God. In this sense the Church is always theocratic, for to her have been opened and handed over the means of the power of God over the hearts of men. She is the ideal active principle, and the role of the State in comparison with her is secondary. The Church leads the State and the people, for she knows where she is going. The Orthodox State freely submits to this leadership. But just as in the individual person the harmony of spirit and flesh has been destroyed by the original sin, so is it in the relationship between the Church and the State. Hence it is practically difficult to carry out the task of Church-State symphony in the sinful world. Just as the individual Christian commits many sins, great and small, on his way to holiness, so the people united in the Christian State suffer many falls on the way to symphony. Deviations from the norm are linked with violations of the hierarchical submission of the flesh to the spirit, the State to the Church.

---

<sup>137</sup> Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo*, Moscow, 1997, p. 17.

But these sins and failures cannot overthrow the system of the symphony of Church and State in its essence."<sup>138</sup>

### **3. Church and State in Muscovite Russia**

Let us now turn to Fr. Gregory's theory that "the transfer of the centre of the Christian Empire to Russia, which was completed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was immediately marked by the violation of that 'dynamic balance' which had been established in Byzantium. We are talking about that radical disruption of the canonical order of the Russian Church that was elicited by the second marriage of Basil III (1525), and by the substitution for the canonical ecclesiastical administration of a puppet one that turned out to be necessary for this marriage. This quite quickly led to the denial of symphony not only in practice, but also in the theory of state and ecclesiastical law."

A Byzantine prophecy of the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century from St. Sabba's monastery in Palestine foretold: "The sceptre of Orthodox statehood will fall out of the weakened hands of the Byzantine emperors, *because they will have turned out to be incapable of attaining true symphony of Church and State*. Therefore, by the Providence of God a third God-chosen people will be sent to take the place of the chosen, but spiritually weakened Greek people".<sup>139</sup> The third God-chosen people was the Russian; and the natural conclusion from it, contrary to Fr. Gregory, is that it was not the Russians, but the Byzantines who destroyed the "dynamic balance" between the Empire and the Priesthood.

Fr. Gregory considers that all the Russian hierarchs should have broken communion already from the time of Metropolitan Daniel, since it was he who allowed the unlawful marriage of Basil III. "Why did they not separate from the Synod? Well, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was understandable (in part): by that time things had already gone so far that any movement could have led to catastrophe. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century they began to separate, but the alternative was the Old Believer Belokrinitsky hierarchy, and this did not elicit great enthusiasm. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century? Yes, there was the case of St. Arsenius Matseevich (who refused even to make an oath of allegiance to the Empress Elizabeth at his ordination, which that empress completely forgave him). Also, there were cases of savage repressions against the hierarchs in the 1720s. But there was no real separation. The reason is obvious: all those who had enough powder at that time were already Old Believers (by the way, the majority of the Old Believers were a completely canonical formation, albeit without bishops, until the 1740s or thereabouts). It would be better to ask why they did not separate from Metropolitan Daniel in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At that time

---

<sup>138</sup> Kartashev, *Sviatia Rus' i Sud'by Rossii*, Paris, 1956; quoted in Tuskarev, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 35.

<sup>139</sup> Archbishop Seraphim, "Sud'by Rossii", *Pravoslavniy Vestnik*, № 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7.

they both could and should have separated. This, in my view, is the key tragedy of Russian Church history.”<sup>140</sup>

Since the Russian hierarchs did not separate from heresy, according to Fr. Gregory, Russia, “the Third Rome”, was merely a “crude surrogate” for the New Rome of Byzantium....<sup>141</sup>

“They should have excommunicated – not even Ivan IV [the Terrible], but his father, Basil III, for his adulterous ‘marriage’, which gave Russia Ivan the Terrible. Then we would not have had Peter I. That is how they acted in Byzantium in such situations...”<sup>142</sup>

Is it true that that is how they acted in Byzantium? Sometimes, yes. Thus the holy Patriarchs Tarasius and Nicholas I Mysticus opposed the unlawful marriages of the Emperors Constantine VII and Leo VI respectively. But not always. Thus Patriarch Euthymius did *not* oppose the fourth marriage of Leo VI, saying: “It is right, your Majesty, to accept your orders and receive your decisions as emanating from the will and Providence of God!”

Moreover, very many Byzantine Emperors literally got away with murder (according to I. Solonevich, “in seventy-four cases out of one hundred and nine, the throne passed to a regicide by right of seizure”<sup>143</sup>) and were not excommunicated for it. St. Photius the Great excommunicated the Emperor Basil I, the murderer of the Emperor Michael III, but this was an exception. K.N. Leontiev tried to soften the significance of this fact, writing: “They expelled the Caesars, changed them, killed them, but nobody touched the holiness of Caesarism. They changed *people*, but nobody thought of changing *the basic organization*.”<sup>144</sup> But an organization cannot fail to be weakened by such crimes; and the comparative indifference of the Byzantines to “the holiness of Caesarism” shows that it was not so deeply venerated by them.

---

<sup>140</sup> Lourié, <http://web.referent.ru/nvc/forum/0/co/BC415C9E/179>

<sup>141</sup> Lourié, unofficial forum of ROAC, “edinaia i edinstvennaia khrist. Imperia”, <http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3328036&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&boazd=12871&arhv=> (08/04/02).

<sup>142</sup> Lourié, “Sergianstvo: parasynergia, pereshedshaia v raskol”, *op. cit.* In another place he writes: In Rus’ in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that which was unheard of before took place: the recognition of certain blatant iniquities (like Ivan the Terrible’s 7 marriages) by all the hierarchs: nobody broke communion with anybody, nobody declared that Ivan the Terrible was excommunicated from the Church... The same should have been done with his father Basil III. It is absolutely clear that in Byzantium such a thing did not take place, and could never have taken place, ever...” (Unofficial ROAC forum, “Razum Tserkvi”, <http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3133196&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv=> (17/05/02). Cf.: “the fact that they did not kill the Terrible one is an indirect witness to the unhealthy relationship to the person of the monarch” (Lourié, Unofficial ROAC forum, “Re: Otcu Grigoiu”, <http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3907022&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv=> (03/07/02)!!!

<sup>143</sup> Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia*, Minsk, 1998, p. 77.

<sup>144</sup> Leontiev, “Vyzantinizm i Slaviansstvo”, in *Vostok, Rossia i Slaviansstvo*, Moscow, 1996, p. 97.



St. Nicholas the Mystic said: "He who tries by force to acquire for himself the Imperial dignity is no longer a Christian".<sup>145</sup> But history shows that the Russians believed more deeply in this truth than the Byzantines. Until the Time of Troubles at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, not one Muscovite Great Prince or Tsar was killed. This fact is not pleasing to Fr. Gregory, and he writes: "By Byzantine standards, such a tsar [Ivan the Terrible] should have been killed like a dog."<sup>146</sup> It seems that he has forgotten the word of God: "Touch not Mine anointed ones" (Psalm 104.15). And that King David, when he had his enemy King Saul in his power, refused to kill him precisely because he was the anointed of God. Indeed, so great was such a crime in David's eyes that when Saul was killed, David killed his killer – in spite of the fact that Saul had evidently lost the grace of God by the time of his death...

What was the reason for this lack of respect for the sacred person of the Emperor in Byzantium? L.A. Tikhomirov points to the fact that Byzantine imperial power was based on two distinct and mutually incompatible principles, the Christian and the Old Roman (Republican). According to the Christian principle, supreme power in the State (but not in the Church) rested in the Emperor, not in the People. However, while supreme, his power was not absolute in that it was limited by the Orthodox Faith and Church; for the Emperor, while supreme on earth, was still the servant of the Emperor of Emperors in heaven<sup>147</sup>. According to the Old Roman principle, however, which still retained its place in the Justinian's legislation alongside the Christian principle, supreme power rested, not in the Emperor, but in the Senate and the People. But since the Senate and the People had, according to the legal fiction, conceded all their power to the Emperor, it was the Emperor who concentrated all executive power in himself, and his will had the full force of law: Quod Principi placuit legis habet vigorem, et in eum solum omne suum imperium et potestatem concessit.<sup>148</sup>

This pagan-democratic-absolutist concept of royal power was exemplified in several of the emperors before the first fall of Constantinople in 1204. Thus Isaac Angelus deposed several patriarchs and declared: "On earth there is no

---

<sup>145</sup> St. Nicholas, quoted in Medvedev, I.P. "Imperia i suverinet v srednie veka", *Problemy otnoshenij mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenij. Sbornik statej pamiati akademiku*, Leningrad, 1972, p. 421.

<sup>146</sup> Lourié, unofficial forum of ROAC, "Re: Kazhetsa", [http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=2668143&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv=\(05/01/02\)](http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=2668143&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv=(05/01/02)). Cf.: "The fact that they did not kill the Terrible one is an indirect witness to an unhealthy attitude toward the person of the monarch" (Lourié, unofficial forum of ROAC,, "Re: Otcu Grigoriu", [http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3907022&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv=\(05/01/02\)](http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3907022&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv=(05/01/02))).

<sup>147</sup> As Emperor Constantine VII's body was being carried to its sepulchre, a herald proclaimed: "Arise, O king of the world, and obey the summons of the King of kings!" (Edward Gibbon, *A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London: The Folio Society, vol. VI, p. 117)

<sup>148</sup> Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'*, St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 163.

difference in power between God and the Emperor. The Emperors are allowed to do anything and can use the things of God on a par with their own, since they received the royal dignity itself from God, and there is no distance between themselves and God”.

The Russians, by contrast, had a purely Christian concept of royal power. And none of the Russian tsars, not even Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, ever claimed to be God on earth. As for the last of them, the meek and humble Tsar-Martyr Nicholas, there is simply no comparison...

Of course, Ivan the Terrible was a cruel and unjust tsar in the second half of his reign. But the Orthodox attitude to rulers who are cruel and unjust, but nevertheless do not compel their subjects to heresy or apostasy from God, is one of obedience. As St. Barsanuphius of Optina writes: “Our Tsar is the representative of the will of God, and not of the will of the people. His will is sacred for us, as the will of the Anointed of God; we love him because we love God. If the Tsar gives us glory and prosperity, we receive it from him as a Mercy of God. But if we are overtaken by humiliation and poverty, we bear them with meekness and humility, as a heavenly punishment for our iniquities. And never do we falter in our love for, and devotion to, the Tsar, as long as they proceed from our Orthodox religious convictions, our love and devotion to God.”<sup>149</sup>

This is not to say that there were not times when the leaders of the Russian Church should not have rebuked the tsar, in the manner of the holy prophets. And the Russian hierarchs should probably have resisted Ivan the Terrible more strongly. But the honour of the Russian Church was saved by the holy Hieromartyr Metropolitan Philip of Moscow, who rebuked the tsar as follows: “Sovereign Tsar, you are endowed by God with the highest rank and therefore must honour God above all. But the sceptre of earthly power was given to you so that you should observe justice among men and rule over them lawfully. It is not fitting that you, a mortal, should become arrogant. Nor should you, as the image of God, become angry, for only he who is in control of himself and does not indulge his shameful passions, but conquers them with the aid of his mind, can truly be called a ruler. Has it ever been heard that the pious tsars disturbed their own kingdom? Never has anything of the sort been heard, not only among your ancestors, but even among foreigners... You have been appointed by God to judge the people of God in righteousness, and not to present yourself as a torturer.”

Here there is not a trace of that “Caesaropapism” (or rather: “Sergianism”) which Fr. Gregory accuses the Russian Church of already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. And generally speaking, although there were cowardly hierarchs in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Russia, there were not heretical ones. In Church-State relations they followed the teaching of St. Joseph of Volokolamsk, who on the one hand

---

<sup>149</sup> St. Barsanuphius, *Kelejni Zametki*, Moscow, 1991.

ascribed the leading role in the struggle against heresy to the tsar, but on the other hand did not give him the status of an infallible authority: "The holy apostles said concerning the kings and hierarchs who did not care for or worry about their subjects: the king who does not care for his subjects is not a king, but a torturer; and the evil bishop who does not care for his flock is not a shepherd, but a wolf."<sup>150</sup> Power is given to the king in the Church *for the sake of Orthodoxy*, and it is precisely for that reason that *his power in the Church is conditional on his Orthodoxy*. If he falls away from Orthodoxy, his subjects have the right to rebel against him – which is what took place at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the holy Patriarch Hermogen called on the Russian people to rebel against the crypto-papist tsar, the false Demetrius.

The tradition of great, independent Patriarchs continued to live in the Russian Church. Not only in St. Hermogen, but also in Patriarch Philaret, the father after the flesh of Tsar Michael, the first of the Romanovs, and especially in Patriarch Nikon, who in a completely unambiguous way defended the freedom and dignity of the Church from Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. One might have expected that for Fr. Gregory Nikon would be a hero of the faith, but for some reason he refrains from praising him...

In the affair of the unlawful deposition of Patriarch Nikon at the Council of 1666-67, the most zealously disposed against the Patriarch and for the right of the Tsar to rule the Church were not the Russian, but the Greek hierarchs. The Eastern Patriarchs sent their *Tomos* or *Patriarchal Replies* to Moscow. According to M.V. Zyzykin, "they said that 'the Patriarch must be obedient to the Tsar, as having been appointed to the highest place. The Russian hierarchs accepted Nikon's theory on the spiritual superiority of the priesthood and the juridical equality and parallelism of the royal and ecclesiastical powers, but until the condemnation of Nikon they did not raise this question, since they wished to be rid of him. But when he had been condemned, Metropolitan Paul of Krutitsa and Metropolitan Hilarion of Ryazan obtained a review of the answer to the question of principle concerning the relationships of the royal and patriarchal power, for they were afraid that the *Patriarchal Replies* would place the hierarchs at the complete disposal of the royal power, and so 'a Tsar not as pious than Alexis Mikhailovich might turn out to be dangerous for the Church'... The Council came to the unanimous resolution: 'Let the conclusion be recognized that the Tsar has pre-eminence in civil matters, and the Patriarch in ecclesiastical matters, so that thereby the harmony of the ecclesiastical institution should be kept whole and unshaken.' *This was the triumph in principle of the Nikonian idea.*"<sup>151</sup>

#### **4. Church and State in Synodal Russia**

---

<sup>150</sup> St. Joseph, *Prosvetitel'*, Sermon 16.

<sup>151</sup> Zyzykin, *op. cit.* vol. III, p. 274.

Unfortunately, the son of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, Peter, turned out to be that very “not as pious” Tsar, who destroyed the harmony of the ecclesiastical institution, abolishing the patriarchate and by his *Spiritual Regulation* making the administration of the Church into a department of the State.

As we have already noted, Fr. Gregory lays special emphasis on the fact that all the decrees of the Synod, including those on the ordination of bishops, began with the obligatory formula: “According to the command of His Imperial Majesty the Most Holy Governing Synod has ordered...” However, one must not forget that in the last period of Byzantine history, which for Fr. Gregory is the model of Orthodoxy, patriarchs were appointed with a very similar formula: “Divine grace *and my imperial will* appoint this most worthy man as patriarch”.<sup>152</sup> Why does Fr. Gregory not see heresy here, but only in the Russian Church?

Few would deny that the *Regulation* was a serious violation of the “dynamic balance” that was the norm of Church-State relations, not only in Byzantium, but also in Russia until the eighteenth century. However, in order to prove that the Russian Church from that time began to confess a *heresy*, it is necessary to prove that the Church officially preached that “the Church *must* be ruled by laymen”, and that the Tsar is her head in questions of the faith. But this cannot be proved except, perhaps, in the case of Theophan Prokopovich. The majority of bishops always remained Orthodox, and they submitted to the *Regulation* only in order to avoid something worse. As Fathers Dionysius and Timothy Alferov write: “Neither the people nor the Church renounced the very ideal of the Orthodox Kingdom, and, as V. Klyuchevsky noted, continued to consider as the law that which corresponded to the ideal, and not Peter’s decrees. Therefore even during the period of the widowhood of the royal throne because of the absence of a lawful Anointed Tsar during the ‘women’s kingdom’ (18<sup>th</sup> century), the significance of tsarist power as ‘that which restrains’ was not wholly lost. Even the German in Russian service Minich noted with amazement that ‘Russia is the only state which is ruled directly by God’. By dint of this it turned out to be possible, albeit with no little difficulty, to restore a lawful Anointed Tsar with an Orthodox self-consciousness in the person of the Emperor Paul Petrovich and his descendants by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>153</sup>

The Russian hierarchs made several attempts to restore the patriarchate and return the Church-State relationship to the “symphonic” standard. Nor were these attempts wholly unsuccessful. Thus with the coming to the throne of Elizabeth Petrovna (1741-1760), as Nikolin writes, “the administration of

---

<sup>152</sup> Demetrius Kapustin, unofficial ROAC internet-forum, <http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3500299&fs=0&ord=0&1st=&board=12871&arhv=> (06/05/02).

<sup>153</sup> Alpherovy, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

Church property was returned to the Synod, for which a Chancellery of Synodal economic administration was established within it".<sup>154</sup> True, the Empress "did not decide to satisfy the petition of two members of the Holy Synod, Archbishop Ambrose (Yushkevich) and Metropolitan Arsenius (Matseevich) to restore the patriarchate or at least give the Synod a president and decree that the Synod should consist only of hierarchs".<sup>155</sup> But the important point is that the hierarchs made the attempt, which demonstrates the Orthodoxy of their thinking.

The reign of Paul I witnessed the beginning of a slow but steady return to the Orthodox norm of Church-State relations. During the reign of his son, Alexander I, the Church, under the leadership of Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, rejected ecumenical overtures from Napoleon and the Catholic Church. And in the latter part of the same reign, Metropolitans Michael (Desnitsky) and Seraphim (Glagolevsky), and Archimandrite Photius (Spassky) led the Church's successful struggle to have the heterodox Minister of Spiritual Affairs and Popular Enlightenment, Prince Golitsyn, removed from his post. De jure the situation remained as before, with the Church in subjection to the State. But de facto the Church had a considerable degree of internal freedom.

According to Fr. Gregory, however, "in the situation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a break was inevitable between the real life of the Church (deprived of a correct system of administration) and the chimerical administrative structure ruled by 'the Most Holy Synod'. Belonging to the chimerical structure could not longer guarantee belonging to the Church." In other words, according to Fr. Gregory, it was possible to be a member of the administration of the Russian Church in the period 1721-1917 without being a member of that Church!! A strange conclusion, and one that makes us suspect that accusations of "ecclesiological heresy" are more fittingly applied to Fr. Gregory than to the hierarchs of the Synodal Church. For according to the Orthodox teaching on the Church, "the real life of the Church" cannot exist under the omophorion of false, unreal, "chimerical" bishops. Such a disjunction is possible only in Protestantism or among the priestless Old Believers.

Fr. Gregory passes over in silence the fact that the last tsar of the Synodal period, Nicholas II, was a most pious ruler, helped the Church in every way, lightened the State's pressure on the Church, was for the restoration of the patriarchate and removed the hierarchical oath to the Tsar as "the supreme judge" It is not relevant, in Fr. Gregory's view. For the 30<sup>th</sup> apostolic canon, he says, has nothing to say about the quality of the secular rulers, but only about the fact of their interference in the appointment of hierarchs...

---

<sup>154</sup> Nikolin, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>155</sup> Nikolin, op. cit., p. 97.

Such a point of view is judaizing, Old Testamental. The canons of the New Testament Church should not be viewed only according to the letter, without attention being paid to the spirit, their inner aim. New Hieromartyr Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd, replying to a similar attempt to interpret the canons according to the letter, wrote: "You know, there was much that the canons did not foresee".<sup>156</sup> And New Hieromartyr Cyril, Metropolitan of Kazan, replied to the very founder of the sergianist heresy: "This is an attempt [of mine]... to melt the lead of the dialectical-scribal use of the canons and preserve the holiness of their spirit".<sup>157</sup> In any case, as we have shown above, the scribal (if not pharisaical) approach of Fr. Gregory to the holy canons, if applied consistently, leads inevitably to the conclusion that almost all the leading hierarchs not only of the Russian Church, but also of the Byzantine, were subject to defrocking for violating the 30<sup>th</sup> apostolic canon...

It is paradoxical that when, for the first time in the history of Synodal Russia a real heresy, the heresy of name-worshipping, appeared, and the Most Holy Synod, acting completely independently from, and even to some extent against the secular authorities (for the over-procurator Sabler, incited, as it would seem, by Rasputin, was on the side of the name-worshippers), openly condemned the heresy in 1913, 1914, 1916 and 1918, Fr. Gregory's anger knows no bounds! He accuses the Holy Synod itself of the heresies of "name-fighting", "Barlaamism", "magism", etc., and says that it is "a power not from God"! In essence we are listening here to the voice of a real church revolutionary, who under the pretext of the defence of the liberty and independence of the ecclesiastical administration, is by all means undermining its authority among the Orthodox Christians.

That the Synodal period was in general a period of decline in comparison to the best periods of both the Russian and the Byzantine Churches is indisputable. Westernism and secular humanism were making inroads into the body of the Church through a variety of avenues, including the secular authorities. This was pointed out and lamented by the best churchmen of the time, men such as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Ambrose of Optina and St. John of Kronstadt. But none of these holy men accused the Russian Church of their time of heresy, and none of them either separated from the Church themselves or called on others to separate. On the contrary, they called on the people to display greater loyalty to both the ecclesiastical and secular authorities. We are therefore presented with a clear choice. Do we believe that the Holy Spirit spoke in those holy men, or in Fr. Gregory Lurye? For those who believe in *the Church*, and in the unbroken life of Holy Tradition, the answer is obvious. Fr. Gregory does not join himself to the unbroken life of Holy Tradition as represented by these holy men, but to that pernicious tradition of rebellion and renovation (albeit with a "right"-

---

<sup>156</sup> St. Joseph, in M.E. Gubonin, *Akty Sviateishago Patriarkha Tikhona*, Moscow, 1994, p. 563.

<sup>157</sup> St. Cyril, in Gubonin, *op. cit.*, p. 655.

leaning, pseudo-conservative pathos) that brought forth such catastrophic fruits in the revolution of 1917...

## **5. Church and State in the Soviet Period**

We can compare the Russian Church of the Synodal period to a wounded man who is forced to walk on crutches. The critics of the Synodal system and future renovationists said: "The Church should not be using the crutch of State power. It is against the canons!" Yes indeed! But what was the solution? Kick away the crutch? Or wait for the injury to be healed, and only then remove it – gently? God's Providence preferred the latter approach; the renovationists – the former. And then, paradoxically, they did exactly what they had so bitterly accused the pre-revolutionary Church of doing: they entered into a union with the State. And what a State! A State far worse than any in history! A State which the "tragicomic" (as Fr. Gregory calls it<sup>158</sup>) Local Russian Council of 1917-18 completely justly anathematized! Moreover, in 1922 these same "knights of freedom", having knocked the "crutches" out of the hands of the pre-revolutionary Church, and accepted them again from the hands of the Soviet authorities, used them to create a new, renovationist false-church and to beat up the prostrate True Church.

One of the most fervent critics of the Synodal system was Metropolitan Sergius.<sup>159</sup> In 1922 and again in 1927, he re-established the Synodal structure, in effect abolished the patriarchate by his usurpation of the patriarchal locum tenancy, Metropolitan Peter, and submitted the Church in an unqualified manner to the Soviet authority that had already been anathematized by Patriarch Tikhon. By 1943, when all the hierarchs who disagreed with him had been liquidated or driven into the catacombs, Sergius, by command of Stalin, founded "the Soviet church", the present-day Moscow Patriarchate...

Paradoxically, Fr. Gregory considers that it was precisely then, in 1927, that "the reform course triumphed – but with intensive support 'from outsiders', which took place after 1917, and only in the confines of the Catacomb Church". And so "Sergianism" (as Fr. Gregory defines it) was defeated at the appearance of, and with the support of, real Sergianism (in the ranks of its opponents)! In a certain sense he is right, of course: the Catacomb Church not only defeated real Sergianism, but also removed from itself the whole burden of the sin of the compromise that the Synodal Church made with the secular authorities from 1721 – more precisely, from 1667, when the Russian hierarchs

---

<sup>158</sup>

Lourié,

[http://www.vestris.com/cgi-agnes/twenty-eight/agnes?PoetAgnes+PoetAgnesHTMLArticle+archive+Архив\\_номер\\_5+127.3.1](http://www.vestris.com/cgi-agnes/twenty-eight/agnes?PoetAgnes+PoetAgnesHTMLArticle+archive+Архив_номер_5+127.3.1)

<sup>159</sup> Before the revolution "the future patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Sergius (Stragorodsky), appeared on various committees in St. Petersburg in the leadership position of chairman. From amongst all the clergy who participated in these committees, Bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky) always held the most radical position and recognised freedom of worship and the need for the separation of Church and State" (*V ob'iatiakh semiglavago zmiia*, Montreal, 1984, p. 14) (in Russian).

followed the Tsar in unjustly condemning Patriarch Nikon. However, it should be pointed out that the Catacomb Church, by contrast with Fr. Gregory, nevertheless venerated the Synodal period of the Russian Church, did not consider the hierarchs of that period to be “heretics”, and accepted the decisions of the Council of 1917-18, especially the anathematisation of Soviet power, as the corner-stone of her own existence. Consequently, they understood the essential *difference* between the pre- and post-revolutionary periods in the history of the Russian Church, the fact that although the pre-revolutionary Church violated the canons, she did not betray Christ, whereas the post-revolutionary sergianist church not only violated the canons, but also betrayed Christ, immersing herself in the heresy of real Sergianism.

What is the essence of this heresy? A distorted understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world, whereby the Church is to serve the world, not as its conscience, as the salt which preserves it from final corruption and destruction, but by conforming herself to it, by pandering to its fallen desires and antichristian world-views. As such, Sergianism is closely akin to Ecumenism, so that the way in which Sergianism has evolved into Ecumenism in the present-day Moscow Patriarchate should come as no surprise. Both propose a wholesale surrender of the Church’s freedom and dignity to the dominant forces in the contemporary world – political forces in the case of Sergianism, religious forces in the case of Ecumenism (although both kinds of forces are in fact directed towards a single goal: the complete *secularization* of the human race). Both heresies are movements of apostasy, and both attempt to justify this apostasy, “dogmatize” it, as it were – in the case of Sergianism, by claiming that only such apostasy can “save the Church”, and in the case of Ecumenism by claiming that only such apostasy can “recreate the Church”. Essentially, therefore, they are two aspects of a single ecclesiological heresy, a single assault on the existence and the dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Sergianism was defined as a heresy against the dogma of the Church by several of the Holy New Hieromartyrs, including Fr. Theodore (Andrejev), Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov, and Archbishop Nicholas of Vladimir and Suzdal.<sup>160</sup>

This understanding of Sergianism led to its formal anathematisation by the Josephite Catacomb parishes of Petrograd, as follows: *“To those who maintain the mindless renovationist heresy of Sergianism; to those who teach that the earthly existence of the Church of God can be established by denying the truth of Christ; and to those who affirm that serving the God-fighting authorities and fulfilling their godless commands, which trample on the sacred canons, the patristic traditions and the Divine dogmas, and destroy the whole of Christianity, saves the Church of Christ; and to those who venerate the Antichrist and his servants and forerunners, and all his*

---

<sup>160</sup> See V.V. Antonov, “Otvét deklaratsiu”, *Russkij Pastyr’*, 24, I-1996, p. 78.



*minions, as a lawful power established by God; and to all those... who blaspheme against the new confessors and martyrs... - Anathema."*<sup>161</sup>

Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko) of Jordanville adopted the same position: "The patriarchate destroyed the dogma constituting the essence of the Church of Christ, and renounced its essential mission, that of serving the renewal of man, substituting for it its service to the atheist aims of communism, which is unnatural for the Church. This falling away is more bitter than all the previous Arianisms, Nestorianism, Iconoclasm, etc. And this is not the personal sin of one or another hierarchy, but the root sin of the Moscow Patriarchate, confirmed, proclaimed and bound by an oath in front of the world. It is, so to speak, dogmatized apostasy..."<sup>162</sup>

**Conclusion.** It is clear that Sergianism, according to this definition, is not that "Sergianism" which Fr. Gregory claims to find in the Russian Church centuries before the revolution. There was no real Sergianism before Sergius. Therefore the thesis that the Russian Church fell into heresy in 1721 (if not two centuries before that date) is false and must be rejected by all Orthodox Christians.

In fact, *Fr. Gregory does not believe in the Russian Church* (not to speak of the Empire). For centuries, according to him, the administration of this Church was "chimerical", that is, essentially *non-existent*. And at the very moment that it supposedly began to come to life, and became independent of the State, it again fell into heresy – this time the pseudo-heresy of "name-fighting"! And since the Russian Church to this day condemns the real heresy of name-worshipping, we can conclude that for Fr. Gregory the Russian Church is still in the grave of heresy, that is, in spiritual death. With the exception, perhaps, of the "little flock" looked after personally by him...

However, the spiritual illness of Fr. Gregory is still more serious: he thinks in a heretical manner about the Church *as a whole*. In order to "cleanse" the Church from the "tares" of sexuality and politics, he has divided it into the "clean" and the "unclean", the monastics and the married, those who need the support of the State and those who do not, the New Testament Christians and the Old Testament Christians. "In the earthly Church," he writes, "there are two paths of life, the Old Testamental and the New Testamental."

In this way, as Ilya Grigorenko writes, he "declares the Church not to be *one* God-established, Theanthropic organism in the New (that is, Christ's) Testament, but a *double* organism, in spite of the word "One" in the Symbol of faith... Moreover, he calls a part of the New Testamental Church of Christ "Old Testamental", thereby denying the possibility of many Christians who

---

<sup>161</sup> S. Verin, "Svidetel'stvo iz nashikh russkikh katakomb", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, N 14 (1563), July 1/14, 1996, pp. 11-12.

<sup>162</sup> Archbishop Vitaly, *Motivy moej zhizni*, Jordanville, 1955, p. 25.

have been baptized and who participate in the Church's one Eucharist abiding in the Grace of the New Testament of Christ."<sup>163</sup>

Fr. Gregory claims to prove the superiority of the Byzantine Empire over the Russian, and thereby the superiority of the Byzantine *Church* over the Russian. In fact, by his manicheistic theories, he denies *both* the Byzantine *and* the Russian Empires *and* Churches, and together with them the Orthodox understanding of Church-State relations as a whole. For if the Church cannot sanctify politics and, in a certain sense, include it into her own grace-filled, New Testamental life, then there is nothing to be done, we must "flee to the mountains" and lead a purely monastic life without any kind of politics or family life – and call on the Empire "to abolish itself".

However, the Church did not accept this eschatologism, and the Christian Empire, fortunately, refused to abolish itself. Thereby it "withheld" the coming of the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2.7), and gave new generations of Christians the chance to join the Church and be saved. For the Priesthood in the image of Christ the High Priest cannot live long on earth without the Empire in the image of Christ the King.

And so only the Orthodox Christian Emperor, said Hieroschemamonk Hilarion the Georgian of Mount Athos, "is in the image of Christ the Anointed One, like him by nature and worthy of being called Emperor and the anointed of God... Other kings of the peoples... imagine great things of themselves, but God's good will does not rest on them; they reign only in part, by the condescension of God. Therefore he who does not love his God-appointed Emperor is not worthy to be called a Christian."<sup>164</sup>

Unfortunately, Fr. Gregory loves neither the Empire nor the Church of Russia. He does not consider them worthy to be called in full measure Orthodox and grace-filled, but prefers to use the words: "Old Testament", "chimerical", "heretical" in relation to them. He is going "in search of lost Byzantium", but what he is fact doing is slandering Russia, and finds himself outside the saving enclosure of the Greco-Russian Church as a whole.

*May 31 / June 13, 2002.  
The Ascension of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

(First Published in *Vernost'*, N 34)

---

<sup>163</sup> Grigoriev, in *Supruzhestvo, Blagodat' i Zakon*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>164</sup> Hieromonk Anthony, *Ocherki zhizni i podvigov Startsa Ilariona Gruzina*, Jordanville, 1985, p. 95 (in Russian).

## **10. TWO ROBBER COUNCILS: A SHORT ANALYSIS**

The Council of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) in August, 2000 and the October, 2000 Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) can without exaggeration be called epochal in the history of Russian Orthodoxy. Here is offered a summary of the main decisions of these Councils, and of the reactions to them on the part of the Orthodox clergy and laity.

### **I. The August, 2000 Council of the MP**

In August, 2000 the MP held a Hierarchical Council which seemed to be at least partly aimed at removing some of the last obstacles towards ROCOR's unification with it. These obstacles, as formulated by ROCOR during the previous ten years, were: 1. Ecumenism, 2. Sergianism, and 3. The Glorification of the New Martyrs, especially the Royal New Martyrs.

**1. Ecumenism.** In the document on relations with the heterodox, few concessions were made on the issue of ecumenism, apart from the ritual declarations that "the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ, created by our Lord and Saviour Himself; it is the Church established by, and filled with, the Holy Spirit..." "The Church of Christ is one and unique..." "The so-called 'branch theory', which affirms the normality and even the providentiality of the existence of Christianity in the form of separate 'branches'... is completely unacceptable."

But, wrote Protopriest Michael Ardov (ROAC, Moscow), "the 'patriarchal liberals' will also not be upset, insofar as the heretics in the cited document are called 'heterodox', while the Monophysite communities are called the 'Eastern Orthodox Churches'. And the 'dialogues with the heterodox' will be continued, and it is suggested that the World Council of Churches be not abandoned, but reformed..." Moreover, immediately after the Council, on August 18, "Patriarch" Alexis prayed together with the Armenian "Patriarch".

Although there has been much talk about anti-ecumenism in the MP, as in the Serbian Church, it is significant that only one bishop, Barsanuphius of Vladivostok, voted against the document on relations with the heterodox (six Ukrainian bishops abstained).

**2. Sergianism.** In its council the MP approved a "social document" which, among other things, recognised that "the Church must refuse to obey the State" "if the authorities force the Orthodox believers to renounce Christ and His Church". As we shall see, enormous significance was attached to this phrase by ROCOR Council. However, on the very same page we find: "But even the persecuted Church is called to bear the persecutions patiently, not refusing loyalty to the State that persecutes it". If we relate this phrase to the

immediately preceding Soviet phase of Russian Church history, then we come to the conclusion that for the MP it remains the case that loyalty to the Soviet State was right and the resistance to it shown by the Catacomb Church was wrong. So, contrary to first appearances, the MP remained mired in sergianism.

Moreover, sergianism as such was not mentioned, much less repented of. This is consistent with the fact that the MP has never in its entire history since 1943 shown anything other than a determination to serve whatever appears to be the strongest forces in the contemporary world. Until the fall of communism, that meant the Communist Party of the USSR. With the fall of communism, the MP was not at first sure whom she had to obey, but gradually assumed the character of a "populist" church, trying to satisfy the various factions within it (including nominally Orthodox political leaders) while preserving an appearance of unity. The consequent lack of a clear, single policy is especially evident in the decisions of the Jubilee council.

In this connection Protopriest Vladimir Savitsky, Hieromonk Valentine (Salomakh) and Deacon Nicholas Savchenko write: "The politics of 'populism' which the MP is conducting today is a new distortion of true Christianity. Today this politics (and the ideology standing behind it) is a continuation and development of 'sergianism', a metamorphosis of the very same disease. Today it seems to us that we have to speak about this at the top of our voices. Other problems, such as the heresy of ecumenism and 'sergianism' in the strict sense, while undoubtedly important, are of secondary importance by comparison with the main aim of the MP, which is to be an 'all-people' Church. In fact, in the 'people' (understood in a broad sense, including unbelievers and 'eclectics') there always have been those who are for ecumenism and those who are against. Therefore we see that the MP is ready at the same time to participate in the disgusting sin of ecumenism and to renounce it and even condemn it. It is exactly the same with 'sergianism' (understood as the dependence of the Church on the secular authorities). The MP will at the same time in words affirm its independence (insofar as there are those who are for this independence) and listen to every word of the authorities and go behind them (not only because that is convenient, but also because it thus accepted in the 'people', and the authorities are 'elected by the people'). In a word, it is necessary to condemn the very practice and ideology of the transformation of the MP into a Church 'of all the people'."

This analysis has been confirmed by events since the former KGB chief Putin came to power in January, 2000. The MP has appeared to be reverting to its submissive role in relation to an ever more Soviet-looking government, not protesting against the restoration of the red flag to the armed forces and approving the retention of the music of the Soviet national anthem. This has also meant a reversion to the doctrine of sergianism. Thus on July 18, 2002, the

Moscow Synod ratified a document entitled “The relationships between the Russian Orthodox Church and the authorities in the 20s and 30s”, which justified sergianism as follows: “The aim of normalising the relationship with the authorities cannot be interpreted as a betrayal of Church interests. It was adopted by the holy Patriarch Tikhon, and was also expressed in the so-called ‘Epistle of the Solovki Bishops’ in 1926, that is, one year before the publication of ‘The Epistle of the deputy patriarchal locum tenens and temporary patriarchal Synod’. The essence of the changes in the position of the hierarchy consisted in the fact that the Church, having refused to recognise the legitimacy of the new power established after the October revolution in 1917, as the power became stronger later, had to recognise it as a state power and establish bilateral relations with it. This position is not blameworthy; historically, the Church has more than once found herself in a situation in which it has had to cooperate with non-orthodox rulers (for instance, in the period of the Golden Horde or the Muslim Ottoman Empire).”

However, Soviet power was very different from the Golden Horde or the Ottoman empire, and “bilateral relations” with it, unlike with those powers, involved the betrayal of the Orthodox Faith and falling under the anathema of the Church. Moreover, if the Church at first refused to recognise Soviet power, but then (in 1927) began to recognise it, the question arises: which position was the correct one? There can be no question but that the position endorsed by the Russian Council of 1917-18 was the correct one, and that the sergianist Moscow Patriarchate, by renouncing that position, betrayed the truth – and continues to betray it to the present day.

**3. The New Martyrs.** After nearly a decade of temporising, the MP finally, under pressure from its flock, glorified the Royal New Martyrs, together with many other martyrs of the Soviet yoke. This was a compromise decision, reflecting the very different attitudes towards them in the patriarchate. The Royal Martyrs were called “passion-bearers” rather than “martyrs”, and it was made clear that they were being glorified, not for the way in which they lived their lives, but for the meekness with which they faced their deaths. This allowed the anti-monarchists to feel that Nicholas was still the “bloody Nicholas” of Soviet mythology, and that it was “Citizen Romanov” rather than “Tsar Nicholas” who had been glorified - the ordinary layman stripped of his anointing rather than the Anointed of God fulfilling the fearsomely difficult and responsible role of “him who restrains” the coming of the Antichrist. Of course, even if the Tsar had committed the terrible sins he was accused of (nobody denies that he made certain political mistakes), this would in no way affect his status if he was truly, as all the Orthodox believe, martyred for the sake of the truth. After all, many of the martyrs lived sinful lives, and some even temporarily fell away from the truth. But their sins were wiped out in the blood of their martyrdom. However, this elementary dogma was ignored by the MP, which wished, even while glorifying the Tsar, in a subtle way to humiliate him at the same time.

As regards the other martyrs, the ROCOR activist Sergius Kanaev writes: "In the report of the President of the Synodal Commission for the canonisation of the saints, Metropolitan Juvenaly (Poiarkov), the criterion of holiness adopted... for Orthodox Christians who had suffered during the savage persecutions was clearly and unambiguously declared to be submission 'to the lawful leadership of the Church', which was Metropolitan Sergius and his hierarchy. With such an approach, the holiness of the 'sergianist martyrs' was incontestable. The others were glorified or not glorified depending on the degree to which they 'were in separation from the lawful leadership of the Church'. Concerning those who were not in agreement with the politics of Metropolitan Sergius, the following was said in the report: 'In the actions of the "right" oppositionists, who are often called the "non-commemorators", one cannot find evil-intentioned, exclusively personal motives. Their actions were conditioned by their understanding of what was care for the good of the Church'. In my view, this is nothing other than blasphemy against the New Martyrs and a straight apology for sergianism. With such an approach the conscious sergianist Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), for example, becomes a 'saint', while his ideological opponent Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, who was canonized by our Church, is not glorified. For us another fact is also important, that Metropolitan Seraphim was appointed by Sergius (Stragorodsky) in the place of Metropolitan Joseph, who had been 'banned' by him."

Other Catacomb martyrs were "glorified" by the patriarchate because their holiness was impossible to hide. Thus the relics of Archbishop Victor of Vyatka have recently been found to be incorrupt and reside in a patriarchal cathedral – in spite of the fact that he was the very first bishop officially to break with Sergius and called him and his church organization graceless! Again, the reputation of Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan was too great to be ignored, in spite of the fact that by the end of his life his position differed in no way from that of St. Victor or St. Joseph.

Some, seeing the glorification of the Catacomb martyrs by the successors of those who had persecuted them, remembered the words of the Lord: "Ye build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets'. Therefore ye bear witness against yourselves that ye are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up the measure of your fathers!" (Matthew 23.29-32). This blasphemous canonisation of *both* the true *and* the false martyrs, thereby subtly downgrading the exploit of the true martyrs without denying it completely, had been predicted by the ROCOR priest Fr. Oleg Oreshkin: "I think that some of those glorified will be from the sergianists so as to deceive the believers. 'Look,' they will say, 'he is a saint, a martyr, in the Heavenly Kingdom, and he recognized the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, so you

must be reconciled with it and its fruits.' This will be done not in order to glorify martyrdom for Christ's sake, but in order to confirm the sergianist politics."

The essential thing from the patriarchate's point of view was that their own founder, Metropolitan Sergius, should be given equal status with the catacomb martyrs whom he persecuted. A significant step in this direction had been taken in 1993, when the patriarch said: "Through the host of martyrs the Church of Russia bore witness to her faith and sowed the seed of her future rebirth. Among the confessors of Christ we can in full measure name... his Holiness Patriarch Sergius." By the time of the council in 2000, the patriarchate still did not feel able to canonise Sergius - probably because it fears that it would prevent a union with ROCOR. But neither did it canonise the leader of the Catacomb Church, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd - which suggested that a canonisation of the two leaders was in the offing, but depended on the success of the negotiations between the MP and ROCOR.

The patriarch's lack of ecclesiastical principle and ecclesiological consistency in this question was pointed out by Fr. Peter Perekrestov: "In the introduction to one article ("In the Catacombs", *Sovershenno Sekretno*, № 7, 1991) Patriarch Alexis wrote the following: 'I believe that our martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for us.' At the same time, in the weekly, *Nedelya*, № 2, 1/92, the same Patriarch Alexis states that the Russian Church Abroad is a schismatic church, and adds: 'Equally uncanonical is the so-called "Catacomb" Church.' In other words, he recognizes the martyrs of the Catacomb Church, many of whom were betrayed to the godless authorities by Metropolitan Sergius's church organization..., and at the same time declares that these martyrs are schismatic and uncanonical!"

For in the last resort, as Fr. Peter points out, for the Moscow Patriarchate this whole matter is not one of truth or falsehood, sanctity or impiety, but of *power*: "It is not important to them whether a priest is involved in shady business dealings or purely church activities; whether he is a democrat or a monarchist; whether an ecumenist or a zealot; whether he wants to serve Vigil for six hours or one; whether the priest serves a panikhida for the victims who defended the White House or a moleben for those who sided with Yeltsin; whether the priest wants to baptize by immersion or by sprinkling; whether he serves in the catacombs or openly; whether he venerates the Royal Martyrs or not; whether he serves according to the New or Orthodox Calendar - *it really doesn't matter*. The main thing is to commemorate Patriarch Alexis. Let the Church Abroad have its autonomy, let it even speak out, express itself as in the past, but only under one condition: *commemorate Patriarch Alexis*. This is a form of **Papism** - let the priests be married, let them serve according to the Eastern rite - it makes no difference, what is important is that they commemorate the Pope of Rome."

The documents of the Jubilee council were well summarised by the ROCOR clergy of Kursk as follows: "Everywhere there is the same well-known style: pleasing the 'right' and the 'left', the Orthodox and the ecumenists, 'yours' and 'ours', without the slightest attempt at definiteness, but with, on the other hand, a careful preservation of the whole weight of the sins of the past and of the present".

\*

## **II. The October, 2000 Council of ROCOR**

Two months later, in October, 2000, the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR took place in New York. In almost all its acts it represented a reaction to, and to a very large extent an approval of, the acts of the Moscow council. Its most important acts were three conciliar epistles addressed: the first to the Serbian Patriarch Paul, the second "To the Beloved Children of the Church in the Homeland and in the Diaspora" and the third "To the Supporters of the Old Rites".

The first of these epistles, dated October 13/26, contained the amazing statement that ROCOR and the Serbs were "brothers by blood and by faith" and that "we have always valued the eucharistic communion between our sister-Churches and the desire to preserve the consolation of this communion to the end of time". And towards the end of the Epistle we read: "We beseech your Holiness not to estrange us from liturgical communion with you".

It should be remembered that this was written only two years after ROCOR had officially reissued its anathema on ecumenism and the ecumenists, and only a few months after the Serbian Patriarch himself had said that there was *no* communion between his Church and ROCOR, calling ROCOR a "church" only in inverted commas! Moreover, as recently as September, 2000, the official publication of the Serbian Church, *Pravoslav'e*, had reported that, at the invitation of the patriarchate there had arrived in Belgrade a Catholic delegation, which had made a joint declaration witnessing to the fact that Serbian hierarchs had been praying together with the Catholics for the last three weeks! So, having justly anathematised the Serbs as heretics, and having witnessed the continuation of their heretical activity, ROCOR was now *begging* to be brought back into communion with the heretics!

Why? The reason became clear later in the Epistle: "A miracle has taken place, the prayers of the host of Russian New Martyrs has been heard: the atheist power that threatened the whole world has unexpectedly, before our eyes, fallen! Now we observe with joy and hope how the process of spiritual regeneration foretold by our saints has begun, and in parallel with it *the*



*gradual return to health of the Church administration in Russia.* This process is difficult and is not being carried forward without opposition. Nevertheless, a radiant indicator of it is the recent glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia headed by the slaughtered Royal Family and the condemnation of the politics of cooperation with the godless authorities which took place at the last Council of the Russian Church in Moscow.

“There still remain other serious wounds in the leadership of the Russian Church which hinder our spiritual rapprochement. Nevertheless, we pray God that He may heal them, too, by the all-powerful grace of the Holy Spirit. Then there must take place the longed-for rapprochement and, God willing, the spiritual union between the two torn-apart parts of the Russian Church – that which is in the Homeland, and that which has gone abroad. *We pray your Holiness to grant your assistance in this.*”

So the ROCOR bishops – this letter was signed by all of them without exception – were asking a heretic anathematised for ecumenist to help them to enter into communion with other anathematised ecumenists – their old enemies in Moscow, whom they now characterised in glowing and completely false terms as if they had already returned to Orthodoxy! Why, then, should the ROCOR bishops continue to speak of ecumenism as an obstacle to union with the MP? As the Kursk clergy pointed out: “It is not clear how long, in view of the declared unity with the Serbian patriarchate, this last obstacle [ecumenism] to union with the MP will be seen as vital”.

The second of the epistles, dated October 14/27, made several very surprising statements. First, it again spoke of “the beginning of a real spiritual awakening” in Russia. Considering that less than 1% of the Russian population goes to the MP, then, even if the spiritual state of the MP were brilliant, this would hardly constitute “awakening” on any significant scale. However, as Dmitri Kapustin pointed out, the supposed signs of this awakening – the greater reading of spiritual books, the greater discussion of canonical and historical questions in the MP – are not good indicators of real spiritual progress: “It is evident that the reading of Church books can bring a person great benefit. However, a necessary condition for this is love for the truth. The Jews also saw Christ, and spoke with Him, but they did not want humbly to receive the true teaching, and not only were they not saved, but also took part in the persecutions and destroyed their own souls. It is the same with many parishioners of the MP. On reading books on the contemporary Church situation, many of them come to the conclusion that sergianism and ecumenism are soul-destroying. However, these doubts of theirs are often drowned out by the affirmations of their false teachers, who dare to place themselves above the patristic tradition. Satisfying themselves with a false understanding of love (substituting adultery with heretics and law-breakers for love for God, which requires chastity and keeping the truth) and obedience (substituting following the teaching of false elders for

obedience to God and the humble acceptance of the patristic teaching, and not recognizing their personal responsibility for their own Church state), they often take part in the persecutions and slander against the True Orthodox. In a word, even such good works as the veneration of the Royal Martyrs are often expressed in a distorted form (by, for example, mixing it with Stalinism, as with the *'fighter from within'* Dushenov)". Kapustin then makes the important point that "an enormous number of people... have not come to Orthodoxy precisely because they have not seen true Christianity in the MP (alas, in the consciousness of many people in Russia the Orthodox Church is associated with the MP). In my opinion, the MP rather hinders than assists the spiritual awakening of the Russian people (if we can talk at all about any awakening in the present exceptionally wretched spiritual condition of Russia)."

Secondly, ROCOR's epistle welcomed the MP's glorification of the New Martyrs, since "the turning of the whole Russian people in prayer to all the holy New Martyrs of Russia and especially the Royal new martyrs... had become possible now thanks to the recognition of their holiness by the Hierarchical Council of the Moscow Patriarchate". As if the Russian people had not already been praying to the Holy New Martyrs in front of icons made in ROCOR for the past twenty years! Moreover, as Protopriests Constantine Fyodorov and Benjamin Zhukov wrote, "the possibility of turning in prayer to the Russian New Martyrs was opened to the people *not by the Moscow Patriarchate (as is written in our Hierarchical Council's Epistle), but by the martyric exploit of these saints themselves, who were glorified by our Church in 1981*. The prayer of the Russian people to these saints never ceased from the very first day of their martyric exploit, but *was strengthened and spread precisely by the canonization of the Church Abroad*."

Thirdly: "We are encouraged by the acceptance of the new social conception by this council, which in essence *blots out* the 'Declaration' of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927". As if one vague phrase about the necessity of the Church disobeying the State in certain exceptional cases (which was contradicted on the same page, as we have seen) could *blot out* a Declaration which caused the greatest schism in Orthodox Church history in 900 years and incalculable sufferings and death - without even mentioning that Declaration or its author by name! In any case, as we have seen, the Moscow Synod in July, 2002 declared that Sergius' relationship to the Soviet authorities was "not blameworthy", so not only has the MP *not* repented for sergianism, but it has continued to *justify* it, contradicting the position of the Catacomb new martyrs whom it has just glorified and who gave their lives because of their opposition to sergianism.

The epistle - which was signed by all the bishops except Barnabas of Cannes - obliquely recognised this when it later declared: "We have not seen a just evaluation by the Moscow Patriarchate of the anti-ecclesiastical actions

of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and his Synod and their successors". If so, then how can we talk about Sergius' Declaration being *blotted out*?!

The third epistle, addressed to the Old Believers without distinguishing between those with "bishops" and "priests" (the Popovtsi) and those without (the Bespopovtsi), was similarly ecumenist in tone, beginning with the words: "To the Believing children of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Homeland and in the diaspora, who hold to the old rite, the Council of bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad sends greetings! Beloved brothers and sisters in our holy Orthodox faith: may the grace and peace of the Man-loving Saviour be with you to the ages!"

It was one thing to remove the bans on the old rites, as ROCOR had done in its Council in 1974: it was quite another to recognise the schismatics as Orthodox. And in such terms! For later in the epistle ROCOR compares the persecutions of the Old Believers to the persecutions of St. John Chrysostom, and begs forgiveness of the Old Believers as the Emperor Theodosius the Younger had begged it of the holy hierarch! But, as Bishop Gregory Grabbe pointed out after the 1974 Council, the sins of the Russian State in persecuting the Old Believers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century should not all be laid on the Church of the time, which primarily condemned the Old Believers not for their adherence to the Old Rites (which even Patriarch Nikon recognised to be salutary), but for their disobedience to the Church. To lay all the blame for the schism, not on the Old Believers but on the Orthodox, even after the Old Believers had proudly refused to take advantage of the many major concessions made by the Orthodox (for example, the edinoverie) while stubbornly continuing to call the Orthodox themselves schismatics, was to invert the truth and logically led to the conclusion that the Orthodox Church was not the True Church!

As clergy of the Kursk diocese pointed out: "The conciliar epistle to the Old Believers, in our opinion, is not only an extremely humiliating document for the Orthodox Church, but also contains signs of a heterodox ecclesiology. Effectively equating the Old Believers with the confessors of Orthodoxy, the Hierarchical Council, first, leaves them with their convictions, thereby blocking the path to repentance, and secondly, either teaches that outside the Orthodox Church there can exist true confession, or considers that the Church can be divided into parts which for centuries have not had any eucharistic communion between themselves. Both in form and in spirit the epistle in question represents a complete break with the patristic tradition of the Orthodox Church.... It seems that all that remains to be added is the request: 'We humbly beseech you to receive us into your communion and be united to the Holy Church... Alas, [it] is composed in such a way that it is not actually clear who has really fallen into schism from the Church: we or our errant Old Believer brothers!'"

The October Council elicited a storm of protest from both inside and outside Russia. The feelings of the protestors were summed by Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky and Roman Vershillo, who said that a “revolution” had taken place, and that “if we are to express the meaning of the coup shortly, then there took place, first, a moral disarmament, and secondly, the self-abolition of ROCOR as a separate part of the Russian Local Church...”

*January 30 / February 12, 2003.*

## **10. CAN THE LEOPARD CHANGE HIS SPOTS?**

As we witness the sad decline of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia under Metropolitan Laurus (ROCOR) into the embraces of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), it may be worth reviewing some of the arguments that members of the MP (and now even many members of ROCOR) produce when challenged by members of the True Russian Church. These arguments have varied considerably with time, and even the MP would no doubt be ashamed of some of the arguments used in Soviet times, when respect for both the Church and the State of the Soviet Union was much higher than it is now. We shall not review these “old” arguments that even the MP is now ashamed of, but shall turn to the “new” ones that have appeared since the fall of communism – although sometimes they are simply the “old” ones souped up in a more contemporary, subtler form.

### **1. The Leopard and his spots**

One argument employed by contemporary advocates of the MP, and even by the MP Patriarch Alexis himself is that since ROCOR was formed as a *temporarily* autonomous organization until the fall of communism, it must now dissolve itself insofar as communism fell nearly twelve years ago.

Two questions are immediately elicited by this argument. First, has communism really fallen? And secondly, even if it has fallen, why should ROCOR dissolve itself *by joining the MP*?

I think we cannot deny that in 1991 communism fell in the particular statist form that we know as the Soviet Union, or Soviet power. I think it is equally undeniable that, at least since New Year's Day, 2000, when KGB Colonel Putin came to power, it has been in the process of being reconstructed.

The evidence is manifold. KGB men – and let us recall Putin's remark that “there is no such thing as an ex-KGB man” - now occupy about 50% of the top governmental posts in the Soviet – sorry, Russian - federation.<sup>165</sup> The Soviet anthem has been re-established as the country's national anthem; the red flag has been restored to the armed forces. Putin has toasted Stalin, and recently a new monument to Stalin was unveiled before a huge and enthusiastic crowd in Ishim, Siberia (the see of ROCOR Bishop Eutyches). It goes without saying that Lenin's mummy remains in its pagan mausoleum in Red Square. The Chechen war continues to be waged in a hideously cruel, typically Soviet manner. The media are once again coming under tight state control (witness the way in which the independent NTV station was simply taken over). Even the fledgling capitalist economy is under threat, and its stock market is plunging, as a result of the recent imprisonment of Khodorkovsky and the

---

<sup>165</sup> Nicholas Kazantsev, “Nel'zia ob'edinit'sa s patriarkhiej!” *Nasha Strana*, N 2739, 1 November, 2003 (in Russian).

State's seizure of a large part of his company's shares. So if there was a time for ROCOR to dissolve itself, it was in 1991, *but not now*.

In any case, what is ROCOR to do after its self-dissolution? The Fathers of ROCOR always spoke of an All-Russian Council assembling after the fall of communism, which would sort out the problems of the Russian Church, elect a canonical patriarch, etc. Obviously by such an All-Russian Council they did not mean a Council just of the MP, but a Council in which ROCOR and the Catacomb Church would be included. In fact, probably a Council from which the MP would be *excluded*, but to which individual hierarchs of the MP would come to offer their repentance, on the model of the iconoclasts at the Seventh Ecumenical Council. It is strange how little talk about such a Council there has been since the supposed fall of communism...

Since no one seems to want to talk about an all-Russian Council, let us consider some other alternatives. One is for ROCOR to proclaim itself the one and only Russian Orthodox Church. This was actually suggested by Protopriest Lev Lebedev in the early 1990s, and appears to have been adopted to some extent by ROCOR at that time. However, this was never done with much conviction (except when dealing with "dissidents" inside Russia), and by the late 1990s the talk was rather of a "reunification" of the different parts of the Russian Church – by which was meant the reunification only of ROCOR and the MP.

But on what basis? On an equal basis, as if ROCOR and the MP were both equally legitimate parts of the Russian Church, two "sisters" of the same mother who had just had a quarrel and were now prepared to forgive and forget? But this "ecumenist" solution was not really acceptable to either side, since the MP resolutely calls itself (and is believed by many even in ROCOR to be) the sole "Mother Church", to which ROCOR must "return" like a naughty child to her parents, while ROCOR believes that the MP must repent of certain dogmatic and canonical errors – sergianism, ecumenism – before it can be forgiven.

However, it is becoming more and more obvious – if it was ever really in doubt – that the MP, at least in its upper reaches, will not and cannot repent. At most it will bend a little to pressure coming, not from ROCOR, but from its own people, as in the case of its half-hearted and qualified canonization of the Tsar-Martyr. The MP had a golden opportunity to repent in 1991, when the chains imposed by its Soviet masters fell away, and there was a danger of a large-scale exodus from the patriarchate. But it did not repent. And now, when it is in a much stronger position than in 1991, and ROCOR is much weaker, it is less likely than ever to repent.

Not only is it not repenting: like the dog of the proverb, it is returning to its own vomit. Thus ecumenism continues unabated since the fall of communism.

The patriarch's incredible speech to the Jewish rabbis in November, 1991 has not been repented of, membership of the WCC continues as before, and while there are complaints about Catholic proselytism it looks as if the Pope is going to visit Russia with the MP's agreement.

The MP today, amazing to tell, is no less enthusiastically pro-Soviet than the civil government. Priests regularly praise Stalin - and now these panegyrics cannot be excused on the grounds that they are made under duress. The idea that the MP has repented of sergianism is laughable. Consider the patriarch's latest statement on Metropolitan Sergius' notorious declaration, on November 9, 2001: "This was a clever step by which Metropolitan Sergius tried to save the church and clergy."<sup>166</sup>

The ROCOR leadership knows all this perfectly well. But it also knows that it is weak, and has therefore come to the conclusion: "If you can't beat them, join them." The leopard, they try and persuade us, has changed its spots; the tree with an evil root is now bringing forth good fruits. But as we know from the Holy Scriptures, a leopard *cannot* change its spots, and "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them..." (Matthew 7.17-19).

In order to make sure of this point, let us briefly look at fruits of the six most powerful metropolitans of the MP, one of whom is likely to be the next patriarch:-

- (1) Metropolitan Yuvenaly of Kolomna and Krutitsa was described in 1994 by the OCA Bishop Basil (Rodzianko) of Washington as "not only a scoundrel, but, perhaps, something much worse than that" (testimony of Michael Rodzianko). Sergei Bychkov wrote in 1999 that he "has never served a day in a parish. He knows the problems and needs of the clergy only by hearsay. Although he came up through all the ranks, he spent the most difficult years for the Russian church abroad. He served in Berlin, Jerusalem, Prague, and even in Japan. He headed OVTsS [the Department of External Church Relations] for almost ten years. He thought that he would be elected patriarch in 1990 after the death of Patriarch Pimen. But he did not make it even to the second round. This so upset him that he suffered a heart attack. But after recovering, he reconciled himself to the situation and began to support the rise of Master [Cyril] Gundiaev. Metropolitan Yuvenaly is notorious in church circles for his nontraditional sexual orientation. A number of monasteries in the area around Moscow have already been turned into annexes of Sodom."

---

<sup>166</sup> <http://www.ripnet.org/besieged/rparocora.htm?>

- (2) Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk, the friend of Metropolitan Yuvenaly and head of the Department of External Church Relations, is an extreme ecumenist and an importer of tobacco and spirits duty-free. Bychkov writes of him that "until recently he was absolutely certain that after the death of Patriarch Alexis II he would undoubtedly become primate of the Russian church. True, events of this year have shaken Master Gundiaev's assurance.... Metropolitan Kirill's tobacco and alcohol scandals have undermined his authority on the international level. Nevertheless he has held onto his positions in the synod. He knows very well the weaknesses of members of the synod and he skillfully manipulates them. This is the great talent of the metropolitan. His impudence and frankness befuddle weak minds. Synod members who know about his ties with high places are not about to withstand his unbearable pressure. His close friendship with Berezovsky also has brought its fruits; the metropolitan has compromising information not only about all of the episcopacy but even about the patriarch and he occasionally leaks it to the press." According to the witness of an MP priest, Metropolitan Cyril once came into his church and saw an icon of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas on the anoly. "*Get the Tsar out of here!*" he said severely!
- (3) Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg, another extreme ecumenist who is in favour of introducing the new calendar into the Russian Church was, writes Bychkov, "a representative of the Moscow patriarchate at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. At the end of the 1960s he was patriarchal exarch of western Europe and served in Berlin. He is notorious for his aristocratic manners (if he wears cuff links then they must be jeweled). Emulating Catherine II's favorite Grigory Potemkin, he enjoys fresh oysters which are brought to him from Paris and London. But his guests are most affected by his wine cellars. Metropolitan Vladimir Sabodan, who replaced him in Rostov on Don, nearly lost consciousness when he caught sight of and tasted the wines from the metropolitan's cellars. In the 1970-1980s his career rise halted and he was shuttled from one episcopal see to another. Patriarch Pimen was not well disposed toward him. Only after his death did Vladimir come into favor again. From 1995 he has ruled the St. Petersburg diocese, thereby becoming a permanent member of the Holy Synod. In Petersburg he began restoring order with an "iron hand," primarily in financial matters, overturning traditions that had arisen over decades (oysters are expensive nowadays). Metropolitan Vladimir's ministry has been constantly accompanied by scandals. Their causes are his inability and lack of desire to get along with clergy. His administrative style is authoritarian."
- (4) Metropolitan Methodius of Voronezh was until recently one of the strongest candidates to succeed the present patriarch. But in 1992 he



was described by his colleague, Archbishop Chrysostom of Vilna, as “a KGB officer, an atheist, a liar, who is constantly advised by the KGB”. An atheist for patriarch? All things are possible in the MP!

(5), (6). Metropolitans Philaret of Minsk and Vladimir of Kiev are both, according to Bychkov, homosexuals who “share one thing in common: under their administrations the largest monasteries--the Kiev caves lavra and the Zhirovitsy monastery--have become examples of Sodom and Gomorra. ‘Gay families’ coexist peacefully in them, concealed by monastic garments.”

Are things any better in the lower ranks?

Well, on July 19, 1999, according to Bychkov, the Synod “devoted much time to the scandals involving the homosexual conduct of two bishops, Nikon Mironov of Ekaterinburg and Gury Shalimov of Korsun. The press devoted so much attention to poor Bishop Nikon that he is notorious throughout Russia. The behaviour of Bishop Gury was just as scandalous. The Holy Synod sent both into retirement, that is, it dismissed them, confirming thereby the justice of the journalistic accusations. But it dismissed them in conditions of strictest secrecy!”<sup>167</sup>

## **2. The Leopard and his cubs**

Ah, but then there are the wonderfully holy village priests and old women that the supporters of the MP like to talk about! Personally, I have not met any holy priests in the MP. And as for the old women, I know of people who were put off Orthodoxy for years by the appallingly boorish behaviour of the old women in MP churches.

Of course, I may be missing something. But even if I am, what does that prove? What does the presence of good, sincere people in the MP (and I have no doubt that there are many) prove about the MP? No more than the presence of good and sincere people among the Roman Catholics or Protestants about their churches. That is to say: *nothing*. For is the truth and grace of a Church defined by the quality of some of its junior members, or by the confession of faith of its leaders? The latter, of course...

But the supporters of the MP are very fond of this “bottom-up” ecclesiology of theirs. They love to assert that even if the older generation of bishops are all KGB agents (not even the patriarch denies that he is, and has been for a long time!), the next generation are going to be wonderful.

---

<sup>167</sup> Bychkov, “The Synod against a Council”, *Moskovskii komsomolets*, August 20, 1999, quoted by Joseph Legrande, “Re: [paradosis] Re: Solovki (WAS: Dealing with Heresy)”, [orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com), 31 August, 2002.

But why? Why should those appointed by KGB agents, ecumenists and homosexuals be anti-sergianists, anti-ecumenists and irreproachable chaste? Is it not much more likely that they will be at least partially tainted by the vices of their teachers, whom they chose to follow knowing their vices? "Know ye not," says the Apostle Paul, speaking about precisely such vices, "that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? (1 Corinthians 5.6).

According to his brother Michael, the OCA Bishop Basil of Washington said, after a trip to Moscow: "Now I agree with you: amongst the young folks there, there are many wonderful Orthodox people," and, briefly remaining silent, he added, "but it will require yet another entire generation, or perhaps even longer, before everything gets back to normal". So, if we accept the testimony even of this pro-Moscow witness, the ROCOR bishops should wait at least another generation before thinking of joining the MP.

And yet even this pessimistic estimate seems to me to be unreasonably optimistic. It depends on several assumptions, viz.: (1) that these "wonderful Orthodox people" will remain in the corrupt MP, and will not feel compelled by their conscience to leave it, (2) that the present leaders of the MP will choose to promote precisely these "wonderful Orthodox people" and not corrupt time-servers like themselves, and (3) that even if, by some extraordinary coincidence, some of these "wonderful Orthodox people" are promoted to positions of power in the church, they will still be wonderful and Orthodox by that time, and will not have been corrupted by the terrible environment they find themselves in.

The fact remains that, while a certain degree of regeneration can take place in a Church from below, that regeneration cannot go far, and will in time peter out, until and unless it is supported and strengthened by regeneration *from above*. For it is a basic principle of Orthodox ecclesiology that the faith of a Church is defined by the faith of its hierarchs. And if those hierarchs are heretical, then all those in obedience to them share, to a greater or lesser degree, in their heresy. You cannot be an Orthodox Christian while remaining knowingly under the omophorion of a heretical bishop.

"But no," said one pious MP layman to me recently. "This is the ecclesiological equivalent of the Filioque heresy! Grace does not come from God *and* the hierarchs. It comes from God alone! It can bypass the heretical hierarchs and go straight to the people!"

Then there is hope for the Roman Catholics, who don't have to worry about the heresy of their Pope! And hope for the Protestants, who said all along that the hierarchy and the priesthood were unnecessary! And hope for all those "Orthodox" individualists (and there are very many of them) who construct their spiritual lives independently of the church organization to

which they belong, justifying themselves on the grounds that they have a direct line to God that does not pass through the hierarch's office!

Yes, we do have a direct line to God. And God can certainly give grace to a believer directly, independently of any hierarch or priest. But nobody can receive the grace of baptism, or of chrismation, or of the Body and Blood of Christ, without which salvation is impossible, except at the hands of a canonically appointed and rightly believing priest. That is the order God has ordained. And He has also ordained that this channel of sacramental grace does *not* pass through the hands of heretics or those who represent them...

### **3. The Leopard and his Tamer**

Another, not dissimilar argument that is sometimes heard is that the rapid building of churches and monasteries in contemporary Russia shows that, whatever the defects of the leaders, the resurrection of Russia is taking place, and that, this being the case, instead of standing aside and carping, it is necessary to have a more positive attitude, to join in the renewal process. And that involves entering into communion. After all, they assert, perhaps we (the ROCOR hierarchs) can have a good influence on the hierarchy, perhaps we can put a brake on the negative aspects of patriarchal life, perhaps we can help to tame the leopard...

It is difficult to believe that anyone actually believes this argument. As Nicholas Kazantsev has recently pointed out, ROCOR has acted as a brake on the MP only so long as it has existed *outside* the MP as a genuinely independent force.<sup>168</sup> Once the tiny ROCOR pond has been poured into the MP ocean, it will cease to have any influence at all.

As it is, such influence as it has had has been rapidly declining in recent years in exact proportion to its *rapprochement* with the patriarchate. Surveys show that the influence of ROCOR was at its greatest immediately after the fall of communism, in the early 1990s, when ROCOR actually fought against the MP and the MP was seriously rattled. But then came the 1994 conciliar decision to enter into negotiations with the MP, the expulsion of the Suzdal dissenters in 1995, and Archbishop Mark's meeting with the patriarch in 1997, as a direct result of which the MP felt emboldened to seize Hebron and Jericho, and the Oak of Abraham at Hebron died after four thousand years of life...

No, the leopard has not been tamed, and it will not be tamed by ROCOR, in whatever form it may continue to exist after the unia with the MP...

There are in fact strong grounds for believing in a future resurrection of the Russian Church. These strong grounds consist in the prophecies of the

---

<sup>168</sup> Kazantsev, *op. cit.*

saints, which speak precisely about such a resurrection. But it is important to note that these prophecies do not state that the MP will gradually evolve into the True Church – that is, that good fruit will gradually begin to appear on the corrupt tree, transforming the tree from bad to good, from corrupt to life-giving.

On the contrary, St. Seraphim of Sarov says that at that time “the Russian hierarchs will become so impious that they will not even believe in the most important dogma of the Faith of Christ – the resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection. That is why it will be pleasing to the Lord God to take me from this very temporary life for a time and then, for the establishment of the dogma of the resurrection, to raise me, and my resurrection will be like the resurrection of the seven youths in the cave of Okhlon...”

And then, continues the saint, he will begin the process of world-wide *repentance*; for the absolutely necessary condition of true resurrection is repentance.

The prophecies speak, not of an evolution of the MP from evil to good, nor of the repentance of the bishops, but of a more or less *complete removal of the higher clergy* of the Church. The initiative for this will not come from well-known bishops, but from people unknown to the world, according to Elder Porphyrius of Glink (+1868): "In due course, faith will collapse in Russia. The brilliance of earthly glory will blind the mind. The word of truth will be defiled, but with regard to the Faith, some from among the people, unknown to the world, will come forward and restore what was scorned."

And the instrument of this restoration will be a True Orthodox Tsar. Thus Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava, passing on the tradition of the Valaam elders, wrote: "... The Lord will have mercy on Russia for the sake of the small remnant of true believers. In Russia, the elders said, in accordance with the will of the people, the Monarchy, Autocratic power, will be re-established. The Lord has forechosen the future Tsar. He will be a man of fiery faith, having the mind of a genius and a will of iron. First of all he will introduce order in the Orthodox Church, *removing all the untrue, heretical and lukewarm hierarchs. And many, very many - with few exceptions, all - will be deposed, and new, true, unshakeable hierarchs will take their place.* He will be of the family of the Romanovs according to the female line. Russia will be a powerful state, but only for 'a short time'... And then the Antichrist will come into the world, with all the horrors of the end as described in the Apocalypse."

As for the lower ranks, Catacomb Eldress Agatha of Belorussia, who was martyred by the Bolsheviks at the age of 119 (!), counselled them not to go to the MP: "This is not a true church. It has signed a contract to serve the Antichrist. Do not go to it. Do not receive any mysteries from its servants. Do not participate in prayer with them." They were to wait for the triumph of

Orthodoxy, when the people will show their true repentance *by being baptised by True Orthodox clergy*: “There will come a time when churches will be opened in Russia, and *the true Orthodox faith will triumph*. Then people will become baptized, as at one time they were baptized under St. Vladimir.”

#### **4. The Leopard as a Protected Species**

When Putin met the ROCOR hierarchs in New York, he used the argument that ROCOR should join with the MP in “serving the homeland”, its culture and traditions. This is a powerful emotional argument for Russians and those who love Russia. After all, who would not want to serve his homeland? Who would want to appear unpatriotic? And especially now that the homeland is beginning to take on the appearance, externally at any rate, of an Orthodox country, and Orthodoxy is being protected by the State as an inalienable part of the national culture of Russia.

But what is the ultimate value here – the State or the Church, the earthly homeland or the Heavenly Homeland, God or Mammon? If Orthodoxy is to be protected because it serves the Homeland, or the State, or culture, or any other value whatsoever apart from eternal salvation with God, then it is no longer Orthodoxy but at best an exhibit in a museum or a zoo, at worst *an idol*.

In early, Kievan and Muscovite Russia, the Church was protected, not because it helped to support the State (although it did do that), and not because it constituted a part of Russia’s cultural heritage (although it was that), but because the State of Russia and Russia as a whole existed *in order to serve the Church*, without which neither the State nor the Nation had more than an ephemeral significance. The earthly homeland, in Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow’s phrase, was the “antechamber” of the Heavenly Homeland. Membership of the earthly homeland was treasured and was fought for because it served as a stepping-stone to membership of the Heavenly Homeland, the Kingdom of Heaven – *and for no other reason*.

Russia was “Holy Russia” precisely because she served something higher than herself, the ideal of holiness, the ideal of union in faith and love with God. And she began to descend to the far lesser ideal of “Great Russia” under Peter the Great only when she began to serve herself rather than God, when the Church became a tool in the hands of the State, serving the State’s this-worldly aims. However, under the later Romanov Tsars the great ship that was Russia began to return to her heavenly calling, to become holy again. This process accelerated under Tsar-Martyr Nicholas, who led Russia into World War I, not for the sake of her and his greater earthly glory, but *to save Orthodoxy in her sister-nation of Serbia*. And when the Tsar abdicated, dooming himself and his family to ignominy and death, he did so in order that this war-effort should continue – in other words, for the sake of Orthodoxy in the true sense.

But in today's Russia, as Protopriest Lev Lebedev writes, "the ideological idol under the name of 'fatherland' ('Russia', 'the state') has been completely preserved. We have already many times noted that these concepts are, in essence, pagan ideological idols not because they are in themselves bad, but because they have been *torn out* from the trinitarian *unity* of co-subjected concepts: Faith, Tsar, Fatherland (Orthodoxy, Autocracy, People)... Everything that one might wish to be recognized and positive, even the regeneration of the faith, is done under the slogan of 'the regeneration of the Fatherland (Russia)!' But nothing is being regenerated. Even among the monarchists the regeneration of the Orthodox Autocratic Monarchy is mainly represented as no more than the means for the regeneration of the Fatherland. We may note that if any of the constituent parts of the triad – Orthodoxy, Autocracy, People – is torn away from the others and becomes the only one, it loses its power. Only *together* and in the indicated hierarchical order did they constitute, and do they constitute now, the spiritual (and all the other) strength and significance of Great Russia. But for the time being it is the ideological idol 'fatherland' that holds sway..."<sup>169</sup>

If ROCOR wishes to serve the Fatherland, she must wait for the true Fatherland to appear above the horizon, like the submerged city of Kitezh. To embrace the semi-Soviet, pseudo-Orthodox Fatherland that is Putin's Russia would be a betrayal of her calling, a betrayal of the true Russia.

There is still time to draw back!

November 4/17, 2003.

(First Published in *Vernost'*, N 26)

---

<sup>169</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 655 (in Russian).

## **11. LAZARUS SATURDAY, THE CHICAGO DIOCESE AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE**

Today is Lazarus Saturday. I remember this day especially because on it I was supposed to be baptized in the Russian Church Abroad – and Archbishop Averky reposed in the Lord. Even at that time, nearly 30 years ago now, Archbishop Averky was insisting that the Moscow Patriarchate was a *graceless* organization, and lamenting the way in which the Russian Church Abroad's relationship towards it was weakening. Archbishop Averky and his writings have a high reputation both in Russia and abroad. And yet how few people heed his anguished warnings today!

Fortunately at just the time that Archbishop Averky died, another zealot for True Orthodoxy took over as the “watchman of the Lord” (Ezekiel 33), warning the people against the coming of the enemy. This was Metropolitan Philaret. In 1977 he warned me: “Vladimir, I advise you to obey the anathema of the Catacomb Church against the Soviet church.” He was one of the very few who were not taken in by Fr. Dmitri Dudko, the dissident Soviet priest, warning in 1980 that although his courage was to be admired, since he was “confessing” from within a false church, he would fail. And sure enough: Dudko “repented” of his confession, and is now issuing passionate dithyrambs in praise of Stalin! Metropolitan Philaret sealed his righteous confession against both the MP and World Orthodoxy by heading the list of hierarchs that anathematized ecumenism and the ecumenists in 1983, and years later his body was discovered to be incorrupt. Two jurisdictions deriving their orders from the Russian Church Abroad have now glorified him among the saints. But not, alas, the Russian Church Abroad, whose present chief-hierarchy buried his relics under concrete...

The next chief-hierarchy, Metropolitan Vitaly, was not known to be a zealot in the mould of Archbishop Averky and Metropolitan Philaret; and his period as chief hierarchy was characterized by uncertainty and wavering and several bad decisions which the consciousness of the True Church has not accepted. Nevertheless, he authorized the founding of parishes of the Russian Church Abroad within Russia in 1990, thus providing a priceless lifeline for thousands of people inside Russia who wished to abandon the falsehood of the MP and confess the True Faith under a true hierarchy. Moreover, in recent years he has asserted, in line with his predecessor, that the MP is a graceless organization (he even called it “the church of the Antichrist”), and led the Russian Church Abroad to reaffirm the anathema against ecumenism and the ecumenists in 1998 (it is he who coined the famous and accurate phrase to describe ecumenism: “the heresy of heresies”).

However, things have changed sharply for the worse under his successor, Metropolitan Lavr, the man who buried St. Philaret's relics under concrete and attempted to drive Metropolitan Vitaly into an early grave through his

law-suits. At the robber council of 2000, he and his fellow hierarchs officially applied to enter into communion with the heretical MP, asking the equally heretical Serbian patriarch to intercede for them in this. He has entered into negotiations with and praised KGB agent Putin, who toasts Stalin and says "there are no ex-KGB agents", and who has turned the clock back to Soviet times. Lavr has buried the confession of the Russian Church Abroad under concrete, attempting to consign it to the tomb as thoroughly and as deeply as Lazarus' body. He holds his nose at what he considers to be the stinking corpse of the Russian Church Abroad's previous confession, calling it "pharisaical".

***But Lazarus is not dead: he is only sleeping...***

Let us now turn to a recent communiqué of the Chicago and Detroit diocese of the Russian Church Abroad, as published in A.V. Soldatov's *Vertograd* for April 1, 2004. This communiqué is moderate in its language, more moderate in its pro-MP pathos than other statements by clergy of the Russian Church Abroad. Nevertheless, an examination of those parts of the communiqué which relate to the MP will reveal just how dangerously ROCOR is walking now, just how blindly it is sleep-walking into the abyss...

"This year," says the communiqué, "has been a good one. As we noted in our resolution of October 2003, we are comforted by the possibility of reconciliation between the two parts of the one Russian Church."

Let us pause here. Why only two parts (it is obvious that ROCOR and the MP are meant)? What about ROCiE, ROAC, the Lazarites, the Seraphimo-Gennadiites, all of which were at one time in communion with ROCOR? Is no olive branch to be offered to them, but only to the completely apostate, thoroughly heretical MP? Why reconciliation only to the left, and not to the right? The schisms between ROCOR, on the one hand, and ROCiE, ROAC, the Lazarites and the Seraphimo-Gennadiites are all comparatively recent (the earliest was in 1990); none of them involve dogmatic issues; all of them involve blatantly uncanonical acts on the part of ROCOR and well-justified and extremely serious grievances on the part of the other jurisdiction; so ROCOR has an extra moral reason to seek reconciliation with them. On the other hand, the schism between ROCOR and the MP is exactly the opposite in nature: it is old (going back to 1927); it involves serious dogmatic issues, Sergianism and Ecumenism in particular, which, in view of Russia's return to Sovietism and the MP's stubborn continuance in the WCC and other ecumenical activities, are far from irrelevant today; and it is the MP which committed the serious uncanonical acts, while it is ROCOR which has the well-justified and extremely serious grievances.

To any unprejudiced observer (and I speak as a member of none of these jurisdictions, although I have had contacts with all of them), it is obvious that



the schisms between ROCOR and the jurisdictions on its right are more easily resolved than that between ROCOR and the jurisdictions on its left (which includes, of course, not only the MP, but also all those it is in communion with – for example, the new calendarist Greeks, the Monophysite Antiochians, etc.).

“The realization of this possibility has had a positive effect on the life of our parishes.”

But the possibility – of the reconciliation between ROCOR and the MP – has not been realized yet. So how can it have had any effect, whether positive or negative *yet*? It is still an open question what effect such a reconciliation, when realized, will really have.

“From the time of the October congress, we can note the success of the journey of our delegation of our Church to Russia...”

Is the shameful trip of Archbishop Mark, Archbishop Hilarion and Bishop Kyrill meant?! The one in which Archbishop Mark asked forgiveness of the KGB in the person of Agent Drozdov (for let’s not beat about the bush: that’s what the “patriarch” is) on behalf of ROCOR, and then kissed his hand in public?! Shame!

“... the broadened pastoral convention in Nayak, the warm response of our Hierarchical Council to the epistle of his Holiness Patriarch Alexis II, and the projected official visit of our First Hierarch, Metropolitan Lavr, to Russia in May.”

No comment.

“Recently, some believers have expressed perplexity or anxiety with regard to ecclesiastical reconciliation.”

And with reason!

“However, when it was explained to them that what was in mind was not a merging or submission, but precisely a reconciliation and mutual recognition, eucharistic concelebration, then their anxiety was replaced by a calm approach.”

This is naivety at best, casuistical craftiness at worst. The writers of this communiqué consider the MP to be the “other half” of the one Russian Church, with themselves as the other half. But the MP is headed by a Patriarch, who with his Synod considers himself to be the head of the whole of the Russian Church. If ROCOR considers him to be a canonical Patriarch, then if it enters into communion with him as with the head of the Russian

Church, it *must* be in submission to him - and the MP would be completely within its "canonical" rights to demand submission!

Moreover, what about the parishes of the Church Abroad inside Russia? Is there any chance that they will not be placed *immediately* in complete submission to the patriarchate? None at all. These believers sacrificed much when they left the MP in order to join the Church Abroad. Now they are going to be thrown back to the lions by people who sit safely outside, thinking vainly that they themselves will remain autonomous in some way.

The Catacomb Church used to be betrayed by the MP and informers sent by the MP into their midst. Now they are being betrayed by ROCOR. Not for nothing was, and is, their password: "I will not give Thee a kiss as did Judas..."

"We recognize both the Church Abroad and the Patriarchate to be heirs of the historical Russian Church."

Yes, make sure the stone is securely sealed over the tomb....

"The events of the past year have reassured us that complete reconciliation is possible in the nearest future between the Church Abroad and the Patriarchal Church, as also complete communion in prayer and the Eucharist on all levels of ecclesiastical life. There has for long existed a de facto communion for laypeople, and now we can hope for such a communion for the clergy."

How can there be one rule for laypeople and another for clergy, even if the situation is envisaged as being only temporary? In any case, why say that "the realization of this possibility has had a positive effect on the life of our parishes" if it is still only possible "in the nearest future" - that is, is not a present reality? And why not be honest with your flock about the obstacles that still remain - Ecumenism, for example? Why not be honest with them and say: "Reconciliation will involve our entering the World Council of Churches with the MP"? Why not admit openly that you will then be in full communion with all the heretics anathematized in 1983 and 1998 by the Russian Church Abroad?

"We recognize that there still remain certain obstacles..."

Which are?.....

"However, at the same time many of the reasons frequently encountered against reconciliation seem to us to be only emotional reactions issuing from misunderstandings, from a lack of knowledge of the history and mission of our Church."

Which are?....

The communiqué does not describe which are the real obstacles that still remain (for presumably there must be real obstacles) and the merely “emotional reactions” to reconciliation. Clearly its signatories want to forget about these real obstacles, and imply that the opponents of reconciliation (which clearly still exist in large numbers even within the Lavrite Church Abroad) are simply being emotional.

Well, I do not believe that the opponents of “reconciliation” with evil are simply being emotional. And in any case, emotion in defence of the true faith is not necessarily such a bad thing, while cool, hard-hearted dismissal of well-founded objections is, as St. Joseph of Petrograd once said to a Soviet archimandrite, equivalent to schism. Martha and Mary wept when their brother died and his corpse was buried.

*And Jesus wept too.*

And through His weeping and groaning and praying, the stinking body of the four-days-dead Lazarus was raised from the dead. The confession of the True Church will also be resurrected. But how many people will perish before then?...

*Jesus said to her: Your brother will rise again. Martha said to Him: I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said to her: I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*

*Lazarus Saturday, 2004.*

(First published in *Vernost'*, N 27)

## **12. THE FORKED TONGUE OF ARCHBISHOP KYRILL**

In the recent interview given by Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco<sup>170</sup> we see exactly why the very first words of the Psalms are: "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the pestilent" (1.1). The ungodly in this case are the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, the sinners are the fifth columnists who have been talking up the supposed virtues of the ungodly, and the pestilent are the KGB men such as Vladimir Putin who have been behind the whole process of the unification of the MP and ROCOR. Blessed is the man who keeps away from such men and their counsel, for his mind will not be darkened by the fumes of false doctrines and lies. He will know what the will of God is and will have strength from God to fulfil it. Alas, in this interview Archbishop Kyrill has shown himself to have fallen away from the blessed and numbered himself with those of whom the Angel in Revelation says: "Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every who loves and practises falsehood" (22.15).

Let us examine his interview in more detail.

He begins by discussing the document, "On the Relationship between the Church and the State" – one of the four documents now officially agreed upon at the highest level by the Synods of the MP and ROCOR. In this document Archbishop Kyrill regrets only that "the mistakes of the Synodal period of our history were not noted: when Peter the Great, disposing of the patriarchate and forming the "Holy Ruling Synod" with an ober-procurator, in fact placed the Russian Church into an extremely strange, and, strictly speaking, uncanonical situation, turning it into a government institution... Other errors and sins were committed by monarchs who had a negative view of the Church, but they did not cause the bitter division which occurred in the 20th century, when the atheists seized power. That is probably why these moments in our history were not touched upon."

No, Archbishop Kyrill, the reason they were not touched upon is that the *errors* of the pre-revolutionary period *cannot be compared with the apostasy* of the post-revolutionary period. But of course it is a useful ploy: to pretend that the unconditional surrender of the Church into the hands of enemies who have openly vowed to destroy it is the same as the partial surrender of the freedom of the Church in some spheres to a State which both professed and protected Orthodoxy, built thousands of churches, promoted missionary work to the heathen and died in a terrible struggle to save Orthodoxy against the heretical West. This ploy has been used for decades by the MP to justify Sergianism; so it is perhaps not surprising that Archbishop Kyrill, who is now de facto if not yet de jure a MP hierarch, should be using it.

---

<sup>170</sup> <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/guest/050712124610>.

The same argument was also recently used by the heretic Fr. Gregory Lourié in an article that argued that the pre-revolutionary Church had fallen into "Sergianism before Sergius", and that the pre-revolutionary Synod was not only uncanonical in the sense that its establishment involved the breaking of certain canons, but "anti-canonical" and even "chimerical"! And in fact this is what Archbishop Kyrill is doing: following Lourié, he is slandering the pre-revolutionary Church, accusing it of Sergianism before Sergius. The question then arises, however: if ROCOR was right to break with Sergius because of Sergianism in 1927, should not the masses of the Russian faithful have broken communion with the Synod in the time of Peter the Great? But neither St. Demetrius of Rostov nor St. Metrophanes of Voronezh, neither St. Seraphim of Sarov nor St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, broke communion with the pre-revolutionary Holy Governing Synod. This leads to one of two possible conclusions, given Archbishop Kyrill's premises: either the whole of the pre-revolutionary Russian Church fell into Sergianism before Sergius, or ROCOR and the Catacomb Church were in fact *wrong* to break with Sergius in 1927...

But Archbishop Kyrill accepts neither conclusion. What he wants to say is that it was alright to reject the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, and alright to accept it, and that you could be a martyr whichever side of the fence you were on. And in fact he *has* to adopt such a position, because this is what was agreed in point 7 of the document on Church-State relations: "The martyrs and confessors who gave their lives for Christ and the Church were numerous, both among those who accepted the 'Declaration' and among those who rejected it."

This reminds me of an article in the Anglican *Church Times* some years ago, which described both those who died for Catholicism in the period of the Reformation and those who died for Protestantism as "martyrs". How wonderfully ecumenical! You suffer for the truth, or you suffer for the lie – it doesn't matter, you get the crown of martyrdom anyway!

Archbishop Kyrill claims that the document on Church-State relations "rejected... any attempt to justify the unnatural relationship between the Church and the God-battling state through use of Holy Scripture." The document may have not used Holy Scripture (because Holy Scripture does not agree with it), but it certainly attempted to justify the relationship in other ways. In fact, the whole document is one long justification of this "unnatural" relationship, this "morbid" compromise.

Thus in point 3 we read: "The ecclesiastical policies of Metropolitan Sergius were doubtless aimed towards the preservation of the Church hierarchy, which was the target of destruction by the militant atheists, and also aimed towards the possibility of administering the Mysteries."

What a lie! Everybody who has studied the career of Metropolitan Sergius knows that long before the declaration of 1927, he trimmed his sails to the prevailing political wind and looked *only after his own interests*. Already at the beginning of the century he took a very active part in the work of the society for the rapprochement of the Orthodox and Anglican Churches. This sympathy for the ideas of the West manifested itself also in his active participation in the activities of the liberal religious-philosophical society of St. Petersburg, from whose bosom there came the heretics S. Bulgakov and N. Berdiaev and the future renovationist leader Antonin (Granovsky).

Sergius' political sympathies were also leftist. Thus "when in 1905 the revolutionary professors began to demand reforms in the spiritual schools, then, in the words of Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), 'his Grace Sergius... wavered in faith.'"<sup>171</sup> Again, when the revolutionary Peter Schmidt was shot in 1906, Archbishop Sergius, who was at that time rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, served a pannikhida at his grave; and he also gave refuge in his hierarchical house in Vyborg to the revolutionaries Michael Novorussky and Nicholas Morozov (a participant in the attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II). Having such sympathies, it is not surprising that he was not liked by the Royal Family.<sup>172</sup>

Sergius was in favour of many of the innovations that were later to be introduced by the heretical "living church" renovationists. Thus among the suggestions made to the Pre-Conciliar Commission preparing for the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church that eventually took place in 1917-1918, we read of "a suggestion of the clergy of the cathedral of Vyborg on the longed-for reforms, presented by Archbishop Sergius of Finland to the Holy Synod on January 18, 1906:

- On the reform of the liturgical language: the future Council must debate the question of the simplification of the language of the Church, Slavonic, and the right accorded to the parish that wants it to serve the Divine offices in that language.
- It must think of abbreviating and simplifying the Typicon, and suppressing certain ritual actions, such as the breathing and spitting during the sacrament of baptism.
- It must think of abolishing the multiple repetitions of the same litanies during the same service, and replacing them by read aloud the secret prayers during the Liturgy.

---

<sup>171</sup> "Preemstvennost' Grekha", publication of the parish of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, Tsaritsyn, p. 7.

<sup>172</sup> In 1915 the Empress wrote to the Emperor that Sergius "must leave the Synod" (A. Paryayev, "Mitropolit Sergij Stragorodskij: Neizvestnaia Biographia", *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti*, N 1, September, 1997, pp. 12-15).

- It must think of giving priests [who have been widowed before the age of 45] the right to remarry."<sup>173</sup>

Sergius also called for another popular aim of the liberals - the complete separation of Church and State.<sup>174</sup> It was logical, therefore, that he should welcome the February revolution and support the Provisional Government. But less logical that he should support the October revolution and the Bolsheviks, who tried to engulf the Church in the State...

Sergius also supported the organisation, founded in Petrograd on March 7, 1917, called "The All-Russian Union of the Democratic Clergy and Laity". This was to be the embryo of the future renovationist schism. As Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) testified, "already in 1917 he was dreaming of combining Orthodox Church life with the subjection of the Russian land to Soviet power..."<sup>175</sup>

Then, in April, 1917, Sergius was the only hierarch of the Synod who was not forcibly retired by the new masonic government...

On April 29, the new Synod headed by Archbishop Sergius accepted an Address to the Church concerning the establishment of the principle of the election of the episcopate, and the preparation for a Council and the establishment of a Preconciliar Council. *This Address triggered a revolution in the Church.* The revolution consisted in the fact that all over the country the elective principle with the participation of laymen replaced the system of "episcopal autocracy" which had prevailed thereto. In almost all dioceses Diocesan Congresses elected special "diocesan councils" or committees composed of clergy and laity that restricted the power of the bishops. The application of the elective principle to almost all ecclesiastical posts, from parish offices to episcopal sees, resulted in the removal of several bishops from their sees and the election of new ones in their stead.

Worse was to follow. On June 16, 1922 Metropolitan Sergius, with two other hierarchs, joined the heretical renovationists, declaring: "We,..., having studied the platform of the [renovationist] Temporary Church Administration and the canonical lawfulness of its administration, consider it the only lawful, canonical, higher church authority, and all the instructions issuing from it we consider to be completely lawful and obligatory. We call on all true pastors and believing sons of the Church, both those entrusted to us and those belonging to other dioceses, to follow our example."<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>173</sup> *Suggestions of the Diocesan Hierarchs on the Reform of the Church*, St. Petersburg, 1906, vol. 3, p. 443.

<sup>174</sup> See Anonymous, *V ob'iatikh semiglavago zmiia*, Montreal, 1984, p. 14.

<sup>175</sup> *Preemstvennost' Grekha*", *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>176</sup> Text in M.E. Gubonin, *Akty Sviatishago Patriarkha Tikhona*, Moscow, 1994, pp. 218-219.

The Sergianist Metropolitan John (Snychev) wrote about this act: "We do not have the right to hide from history those sad and staggering apostasies from the unity of the Russian Church which took place on a mass scale after the publication in the journal 'Living Church' of the epistle-appeals of the three well-known hierarchs. Many of the hierarchs and clergy reasoned naively. Thus: 'If the wise Sergius has recognized the possibility of submitting to the Higher Church Administration, then it is clear that we, too, must follow his example.'"<sup>177</sup>

Nor did Metropolitan Sergius quickly repent of his heresy. As Hieromartyr Damascene of Glukhov pointed out, he "took his time" over repenting, and did not rejoin the True Church until 1924.

Then, in 1926, Metropolitan Sergius indulged in a naked struggle for power – the power of the first hierarch of the Russian Church – with the locum tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, the future Hieromartyr Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl. Eventually, having the backing of the OGPU, Sergius prevailed and Metropolitan Agathangel gave up his much stronger claim "for the sake of the unity of the Church". But already many were looking at Metropolitan Sergius with suspicion. Had not the famous Optina Elder Nectarius declared: "Metropolitan Sergius has repented, but the poison of renovationism is in him still"? Little more than a year later, after the publication of the infamous "Declaration", most of the senior hierarchs of the Russian Church, as well as Elder Nectarius, had broken communion with him...

Metropolitan Sergius' "Declaration" was not aimed at "the preservation of the church hierarchy" for the simple reason that it *destroyed* the church hierarchy – only four bishops were left at liberty in the whole of the USSR by 1939. Was this merely a miscalculation, an action that was intended for the good but turned out for the worse? But how could the "wise Sergius" have made such a terrible miscalculation? And why, when he saw that things were not working out as he hoped and expected, did he not change course, as his superior, Metropolitan Peter, and so many of his colleagues urged him to? And why, if he simply wanted to preserve the church hierarchy, did he send so many of them to their deaths by branding them "counter-revolutionaries"?!

The document says in point 5: "The publication of the 'Declaration' did not mean that the Church was of one mind with the ideology of the atheist state". The *Church*, of course, was not – but Metropolitan Sergius was. If not, why did he praise the revolution and condemn all those who opposed it, including all the opponents of his "Declaration" as "counter-revolutionaries"? Why did he say that the joys and sorrows of the revolution were his sorrows? Sergius set a terrible precedent: innumerable statements of support by MP hierarchs for the Communist Party can be quoted. As late as July 4/17, 1990 Patriarch

---

<sup>177</sup> Snychev, "Mitropolit Sergij i Obnovlenneskij Raskol".



Alexis II said that he was praying for the preservation of the Communist Party!

But let us return to Archbishop Kyrill: "For us the most important thing is to condemn the course of church-state relations that he chose, which has already been accomplished. Orthodox Christians cannot condemn an individual. For the Holy Fathers and the teachers of the Church always said that one can condemn sin and untruth, but not the sinner. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said this in His Gospel. That is why we cannot judge Patriarch Sergius, for he has already appeared before God."

Strange... A hierarch who has been given the power to bind and to loose, and who is committed by his hierarchical oath to condemn everyone and everything that the Church has condemned, suddenly absolves himself from any such responsibility! So what of all the heretics who were condemned and anathematized by name by the Ecumenical Councils? What of the individuals that the Russian Church has condemned in various Councils down the ages? What of Archbishop Kyrill's own condemnation of his own first-hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly? Is Archbishop Kyrill going to be squeamish and withdraw himself from all these Councils, saying: "I judge only the sin, but not the sinner"? Well, we will not force his so tender conscience: let him withdraw from all such condemnations – and resign his bishopric at the same time!

He goes on: "Are there any analogous cases in the history of the Orthodox Church by which we can judge the actions of Patriarch Sergius?"

But why worry about "analogous cases", Archbishop Kyrill, if you have already resolved to judge the sin, but not the sinner (unless the sinner happens to be your own first hierarch)? Or perhaps you want to say that the sin of Sergianism was not a sin after all? Yes, that is what you are trying to do...

"I personally feel that the situation of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927 is similar to the situation in which Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople found himself in 1821, when the Greeks, seeking the overthrow of the Mohammedan yoke and the reestablishment of an independent Orthodox state, rose up against the Turks. Right after the Greek revolt, the Turks destroyed the Church of the Live-Bearing Source in Constantinople, desecrating holy icons, looting churches and monasteries, wandering through the streets during Passion Week and killing Orthodox people. In his "decree of excommunication," issued by order of the Mohammedans, Gregory V invoked "eternal anathema" to those who revolted, and defrocked the clergymen and monks of Mt Athos who supported them, and deemed them "worthy of the fires of Gehenna." This patriarchal damnation frightened no

one. Still, the Greeks, including the clergy, did not condemn their patriarch, seeing that his terrible decree was coerced."

This is not an analogous case at all. Let us first ask the question: was the Ottoman sultan a legitimate authority, and were Orthodox Christians bound to obey him in everything that did not directly contradict the commandments of God? The answer to this question is: yes. The second question is: was Soviet power a legitimate power, and were Orthodox Christians bound to obey it as such? The answer to that question is: *no*. For the Russian Church Council of 1917-1918 had anathematized Soviet power, and Patriarch Tikhon had forbidden the children of the Church to have anything to do with such "outcasts of the human race".

So when Patriarch Gregory anathematised the insurgents against Ottoman power, whether sincerely or not, he undoubtedly had good reasons for his action. After all, the insurgents had sworn to obey the Sultan as their legitimate political ruler, and even commemorated him at the Liturgy. The Church's attitude to the revolution - the French revolution in the first place, and then all other revolutions against legitimate political authorities - was expressed in a work called *Paternal Teaching*, which appeared in the revolutionary year of 1789, and which, according to Charles Frazee, "was signed by [Patriarch] Anthimus of Jerusalem but was probably the work of the later Patriarch Gregory V. The document is a polemic against revolutionary ideas, calling on the Christians 'to note how brilliantly our Lord, infinite in mercy and all-wise, protects intact the holy and Orthodox Faith of the devout, and preserves all things'. It warns that the devil is constantly at work raising up evil plans; among them is the idea of liberty, which appears to be so good, but is only there to deceive the people. The document points out that [the struggle for] political freedom is contrary to the Scriptural command to obey authority, that it results in the impoverishment of the people, in murder and robbery. The sultan is the protector of Christian life in the Ottoman Empire; to oppose him is to oppose God."<sup>178</sup>

The bad fruits of the Greek revolution, which was anathematized by Patriarch Gregory and his successor, were plain to see: a schism in the Church that lasted until 1852, terrible reprisals by the Turks against the civilian population, a great increase in western influence with a Catholic king and Protestant constitution, the closure of most of the monasteries... Constantine Nikolayevich Leontiev described the bad fruits of the Greek revolution, and succeeding revolutions, in his excellent essay, "The Fruits of the National Movements". Patriarch Gregory therefore stood *against* the revolution and was essentially a victim of that revolution.

---

<sup>178</sup> Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece 1821-1853*, Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 8.

"Patriarch" Sergius was quite the opposite: he threw in his lot with the revolution, and so died peacefully in his bed while thousands of his brothers, banned and branded by him, were tortured to death. There is no analogy here. Don't slander the name of a true martyr, Archbishop Kyrill, by comparing him with the greatest Judas in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church!

"No one can forget the horror experienced by the representatives of the Church during the godless repressions of the 20th century. Some things were done only after lengthy, brutal persecutions, and not from free will. That is why I think that Patriarch Sergius himself should not be condemned, although we did condemn the "Declaration" so that this mistake would not be repeated in the future."

I have already shown that "Patriarch" Sergius had a long history of compromise and betrayal even before his notorious "Declaration", and that according to St. Nectarius of Optina he had "the poison of renovationism in him still". Another saint, Hieromartyr Victor of Glazov, prophesied as early as 1911 that Metropolitan Sergius would "shake the Church" through his false teaching on redemption. So it was not "lengthy, brutal persecutions" that propelled him to betray the Church, but his own inner heretical cast of mind.

Moreover, as I have shown, the "Declaration" has not been condemned by the MP. On the contrary, the document on Church-State relations has tried to excuse it in every possible way. As for seeing "that this mistake [is] not repeated in the future", how can we have any confidence in that, when the leading hierarchs of the MP are all long-term KGB agents who have repeated Sergius' sin in much less difficult circumstances?...

"At one time," continues Archbishop Kyrill, "some individual bishops and clergymen here in the diaspora said that the Church in Russia is "without grace," that She was "not a Church," but this does not correlate with the actual position of the entire fullness of the Russian Church Abroad. This was not said by our previous First Hierarchs: Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), Metropolitan Anastassy (Gribanovsky). This was never stated by a single Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. We do not have the right to say this; this would be canonically and ecclesiastically ignorant. In general, the question of "grace" belongs to God, and mortals cannot judge this."

Once again, Archbishop Kyrill absolves himself from the responsibility of answering the questions he is put in office to answer. On this feast of the holy Apostles, we should remember that the Apostles and their successors not only have the right, but also the *duty*, to define where the Church and where it is not. Consider what St. Maximus said of the Monothelites: "In addition to having excommunicated themselves from the Church, they have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place

recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?" Consider also what the ROCOR itself proclaimed in 1983 and again, with Archbishop Kyrill's signature, in 1998: "To those who... do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation... **Anathema.**"

But Archbishop Kyrill, alas, no longer acts with the authority of an Orthodox bishop; he no longer wishes to distinguish between true mysteries and false mysteries, let alone anathematise those who fail to make that distinction (for that would mean anathematising himself)...

In any case, what Archbishop Kyrill is wrong about Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky). In 1927 Metropolitan Anthony issued an encyclical in which he wrote: "Now everywhere two epistles are being published in the newspapers and are being read in many churches which until recently were Orthodox – epistles of two, alas, former beloved pupils of mine with whom I was once in agreement, Metropolitans Sergius and Eulogius, who have now fallen away from the saving unity of the Church and have bound themselves to the enemies of Christ and the Holy Church – the disgusting blaspheming Bolsheviks, who have submitted themselves in everything to the representatives of the Jewish false teaching which everywhere goes under the name of communism or materialism... Let these new deceivers not justify themselves by declaring that they are not the friends of the Bolsheviks and Jews who stand at the head of the Bolshevik kingdom: in their souls they may not be their friends, but they have submitted, albeit unwillingly, to these enemies of Christ, and they are trying to increase their power not only over the hapless inhabitants of Holy Russia, but also over all Russian people, even though they have departed far from the Russian land."<sup>179</sup>

So Metropolitan Sergius "fell away from the saving unity of the Church". Does this not mean that he lost grace? Nor were these words of Metropolitan Anthony a "flash in the pan". On August 22, 1928, he issued "*the completely definitive* declaration of our Synod of Bishops that the Moscow Synod has deprived itself of all authority, since it has entered into agreement with the atheists, and without offering any resistance it has tolerated the closing and destruction of the holy churches, and the other innumerable crimes of the Soviet government... That illegally formed organization which has entered into union with God's enemies, which Metropolitan Sergius calls an Orthodox Synod – but which the best Russian hierarchs, clergy and laymen have refused to recognize – ... must not be recognized by our Orthodox Churches, nor by our Synod of Bishops with its flock here abroad. Furthermore, the organization of the Moscow Synod must be recognized to be exactly the same sort of apostates from the Faith as the ancient libellatici, that is, Christians

---

<sup>179</sup> Protopriest Vladislav Tsyppin, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov', 1925-1938*, Moscow: Izdanie Sretenskogo Monastyria, 1999, pp. 383-384.

who although they refused to blaspheme openly against Christ and offer sacrifices to the idols, nevertheless still received from the priests of the idols false documents verifying that they were in complete accord with the adherents of pagan religion..."<sup>180</sup>

Archbishop Kyrill goes on: "At the Council of 1938... the Bishops... admitted that only Metropolitan Sergius himself is excluded from communion with ROCOR and that his sin does not extend to his successors, which Holy New Martyr Kyrill of Kazan said also."

Metropolitan Kyrill said nothing of the sort. What he did say, in March, 1937, was: "The expectations that Metropolitan Sergius would correct himself have not been justified, *but there has been enough time for the formerly ignorant members of the Church, enough incentive and enough opportunity to investigate what has happened*; and very many have both investigated and understood that Metropolitan Sergius is departing from that Orthodox Church which the Holy Patriarch Tikhon entrusted to us to guard, and consequently there can be no part or lot with him for the Orthodox. The recent events have finally made clear the renovationist nature of Sergianism. We cannot know whether those believers who remain in Sergianism will be saved, because the work of eternal Salvation is a work of the mercy and grace of God. But for those who see and feel the unrighteousness of Sergianism (those are your questions) it would be unforgiveable craftiness to close one's eyes to this unrighteousness and seek there for the satisfaction of one's spiritual needs when one's conscience doubts in the possibility of receiving such satisfaction. Everything which is not of faith is sin..."<sup>181</sup>

So there we have it, from a supposed "moderate": as early as 1937, long before ecumenism, Sergius was already "departing from that Orthodox Church which the Holy Patriarch Tikhon entrusted us to guard, and consequently there can be no part or lot with him for the Orthodox." Moreover, no believer who understands the "unrighteousness" of Sergianism is allowed to "seek [in the MP] the satisfaction of his spiritual needs". For that would be "unforgiveable craftiness".

Need we say more? Does not the voice of the most respected and widely quoted of all the new hieromartyrs of Russia, the most senior hierarch of the Russian Church after the death of St. Peter, blow to pieces all the "unforgiveable craftiness" of the MP-ROCOR joint statement, as well as Archbishop Kyrill's own craftiness?

The Prophet Ezekiel said that false pastors are like dogs who can't bark. Archbishop Kyrill has forgotten how to bark, how to protect his flock against

---

<sup>180</sup> *Pis'ma Blazhenneishago Mitropolita Antonia (Khrapovitskogo)*, Jordanville, 1988, pp. 105-106.

<sup>181</sup> Letter of Metropolitan Cyril to Hieromonk Leonid, February 23 / March 8, 1937, *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 16, August 15/28, 1997, p. 7. Italics mine (V.M.).

the wolves of heresy. Instead, he goes up to them with his tail behind his legs and licks their hands in the most abjectly servile manner. Such hirelings have been rejected by the conciliar voice of the Russian Church. May God protect us from this Judas sin as we say: "Nor will I give Thee a kiss, as did Judas..."

*June 30 / July 13, 2005.  
Synaxis of the Holy Apostles.*

### **13. THE SPIRITUAL DARWINISM OF FR. ALEXANDER LEBEDEV**

The title of Fr. Alexander Lebedev's recent posting on the internet: "It's Time to Get Real" tells us much about the nature and quality of its content. This is not going to be an exhortation to follow the straight and narrow path, to struggle harder against the world, the flesh and the devil. This is not going to be a warning about the end of the world and the coming of the Antichrist and the possibility of losing everything through carelessness at the last moment. No: "it's time to get real", that is, stop trying to run against the tide of the modern world. Be realistic: you're too small, too insignificant, above all too *out-dated*.

"One is bound to come to the conclusion," he begins, "that most people are pretty set in their attitudes toward rapprochement between the two parts of the Russian Church." So right from the beginning we get the subtle insistence: there are only two parts of the Russian Church – the MP and ROCOR. Don't even dare to think that there might be other parts! Don't even dare to think that the Russian Church jurisdictions that have broken away – or, more usually, been thrown out – by Archbishop Mark and company since 1990: the Seraphimo-Gennadiites, ROAC, ROCiE, RTOC, not to mention those Catacomb Christians whom up till recently we have been taught to consider the most heroic members of the Russian Church, can even be considered as alternatives to the MP-ROCOR union! Besides ROCOR and the MP, Fr. Alexander is saying, there is *nobody*. So if you reject the union between them you'll be completely on your own!

Since when did such an argument count for anything at all to a consciously confessing Orthodox Christian?! Did it count for anything to St. Maximus the Confessor in the 7<sup>th</sup> century? Or St. Mark of Ephesus in the 15<sup>th</sup> century? Or St. Hermogen of Moscow in the 17<sup>th</sup> century? Did they not rather follow other advice, advice such as: "Strive even to death for the truth, and the Lord God will fight for you " (Sirach 4.28), "Follow not a multitude to do evil" (Sirach), "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that set themselves against me round about" (Psalms 3.6), "Fear not, *little* flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12.32)?

Having tried to frighten us with the prospect of isolation, Fr. Alexander goes on to frighten us with the prospect of medieval fanaticism: "Some who criticize the documents, especially the ones on Church-State relations, attack them for not openly criticizing Metropolitan Sergius personally. It is as if the demonization of Metropolitan Sergius is of the utmost importance. It seems that some people will not be satisfied unless the remains of Metropolitan Sergius are exhumed, and then burned in the middle of Red Square, while all the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate are made to kneel on broken glass, while scourging themselves on their backs with whips of barbed wire."

Eloquent stuff, but can we really take it seriously? I know nobody who makes such demands (kneeling on broken glass even – what will he think of next!). Fr. Alexander is raising a straw man and delighting in pulling it down. No, our demand is simple: that those who followed the narrow path, the path of God’s commandments, continue to be praised, while those who veered away from that path, continue to be condemned. That is what we do every year on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, when we praise the confessors of Orthodoxy and condemn the heretics and apostates. Among the latter is Metropolitan Sergius. That has been the teaching of ROCOR and the Catacomb Church for many decades. It is not ROCOR’s teaching now – because the MP has put its foot down and will brook no opposition. And since ROCOR fears isolation, fears being alone in the middle of this big, cold world, it has surrendered. It’s as simple and brutal and *shameful* as that.

“And some of our people simply have no understanding of the mindset of people who suffered from 80 years of totalitarian oppression. Just about everyone in the former Soviet Union suffered enormously from the Red Terror - and learned how to survive and live and raise families in those circumstances. This required that people make compromises, sometimes significant compromises, in order to survive. People were forced to pretend that they kowtowed to the party line--and woe to the one who would fall out of step.”

We might call this the doctrine of Spiritual Darwinism. That is, when times get hard and the world, the flesh and the devil compel us, at the cost of our lives, to make compromises, “sometimes significant compromises”, in order to survive, then we must make the compromises! Because we must survive at all costs! We must survive and “raise families”! Never mind that we shall then survive at the cost of our eternal souls. Never mind that we shall survive in this life only in order to suffer eternal condemnation in the next. Never mind that those families raised at the cost of so many lies and compromises may later come to regret their parents’ weakness and despise the evil society it created and they have to live in. The important thing is that the race should survive!

The martyrs, of course, did not survive. Many of them didn’t live to raise families. Many took their families with them into the camps and torture-chambers. Evidently, from Fr. Alexander’s point of view, they made the wrong choice. For if it is the fittest who survive, then those who did not survive could not have been the fittest...

Or perhaps I am being unjust to Fr. Alexander here. He may say he admires the martyrs. But he is determined not to follow their example. And in any case since “just about everyone in the Soviet Union” supposedly did not follow their example – a lie, since until 1945 a staggeringly high proportion of



the population did suffer for Christ – it is necessary to follow the majority. Fr. Alexander, as well as being a spiritual Darwinist, is also a spiritual democrat – the majority is always right.

“This is the reason why people who grew up in such circumstances are willing to see the compromises made by Metropolitan Sergius and the succeeding bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate as understandable, and, in fact, necessary to ensure the survival of at least the structure of the Church and some number of churches and monasteries.”

Yes, of course. “The sinner praiseth himself in the lusts of his soul” (Psalms 9.23), so he will praise and “understand” those who sin like him. To do otherwise would be hypocritical – and there’s no need to be hypocritical in today’s climate, when sin is praised on all sides. Moreover, we, too, can understand the compromises made by Sergius and the MP. Sin is easily understandable because we all live in it – it is holiness that is more difficult to understand.

But, Fr. Alexander, you didn’t really mean to say that these compromises were also “*necessary*”?! But this is the purest Sergianism! I expected you to make excuses for Sergius, but not to say that his sin was no sin at all! Have you forgotten God? Have you forgotten that without God it is impossible even to cross a field, as the Russian proverb says? No church stands or falls without God willing it to stand or fall – and God’s will is inclined to mercy towards the Church to the extent that the Church follows His will. Man’s efforts to shore up his existence without God and in despite of His commandments only hasten his downfall. And this is precisely what happened in the case of Sergius and his declaration – it had the most catastrophic consequences possible, not only for the souls of the sergianists, but even as regards the survival “of at least the structure of the Church”.

Consider the words of St. John of San Francisco: “The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius *brought no benefit to the Church*. The persecutions not only did not cease, but also sharply increased. To the number of other accusations brought by the Soviet regime against clergy and laymen, one more was added – non-recognition of the Declaration. At the same time, a wave of church closings rolled over all Russia... Concentration camps and places of forced labor held thousands of clergymen, a significant part of whom never saw freedom again, being executed there or dying from excessive labors and deprivations.”<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>182</sup> St. John Maximovich, *The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. A Short History*, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997, pp. 28-29. Italics mine (V.M.). Even a recent biography of Sergius by an MP author accepts this fact: “If Metropolitan Sergius, in agreeing in his name to publish the Declaration of 1927 composed by the authorities, hoping to buy some relief for the Church and the clergy, then *his hopes not only were not fulfilled, but the persecutions after 1927 became still fiercer, reaching truly hurricane-force in 1937-38.*” (Sergius Fomin, *Strazh Doma Gospodnia*, Moscow, 2003, p. 262)

“One must also recognize the enormous part that the victory over the Nazis in World War II and the entire war effort has on the formation of the psyche of the people who lived in the Soviet Union. Some 50 million people [sic] died as a result of that war. Entire areas of the country were devastated. In some regions, after the war, women outnumbered men by a factor of 8 to 1. Just think what *that* does in creating normal demographics!”

“Normal demographics”. Yes, of course, that is a very important consideration for the Spiritual Darwinist. It’s all a question of numbers and ratios. Not enough women, and the race will not survive! Funny, then, that now, in time of peace, when this wonderful religious renaissance is supposedly taking place, the population of Russia is continuing to decline at an alarming rate! How do you explain that, Fr. Alexander?

In any case, what does the figure of 50 million dead in World War II – the usually accepted figure is 20 million, very many of whom died as a result of Soviet action against their own population – have to do with the rights or wrongs of Sergius’ actions? Nothing whatsoever, in my opinion. Unless such staggering losses are seen as *the punishment of God against a people that has apostasised from Him*, which was the opinion of the Catacomb saints, including some, like Elder Theodosy of Minvody, who have been glorified also by the MP.

About one thing we must be absolutely clear when discussing World War II and the role of Metropolitan Sergius and the Russian Church in it: *the victory of the Soviet Union was a most terrible disaster for the Orthodox Church throughout the world*. We know from the writings of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and others that most of believing Russia at the time was hoping for a German victory. For the Germans, evil though they were, could not be compared as regards antichristian zeal with the Soviets. If they had won, then communism would have been destroyed. Of course, it would have been necessary then to liberate Russia from the Germans. But very many true Russian patriots viewed such a prospect with much less alarm and foreboding than the continuation of the Soviet regime. For what was the result in actual fact? The consolidation of the power of militant atheism from Berlin to Vladivostok and, a little later, to Peking; the enormously enhanced power and prestige of communism throughout the world, the destruction of the Churches of Eastern Europe and the enslavement of Eastern Europe to communism; the Greek civil war between the monarchist and communists, which claimed one million victims; the fleeing of the ROCOR Synod from Europe to America; the falling away of the American Metropolia and the Russian Church in China to the Soviets, etc.

In this terrible, world-wide victory of Satan, Metropolitan Sergius and the MP played a very important part by their unstinting support for the militant

atheists and in their loathsome worship of Stalin. Thus in response to the MP's description of Stalin as "the chosen one of the Lord, who leads our fatherland to prosperity and glory", Metropolitan Anastasius, first-hierarch of ROCOR, wrote that this was the point "where the subservience of man borders already on blasphemy. Really – can one tolerate that a person stained with blood from head to foot, covered with crimes like leprosy and poisoned deeply with the poison of godlessness, should be named 'the chosen of the Lord', could be destined to lead our homeland 'to prosperity and glory'? Does this not amount to casting slander and abuse on God the Most High Himself, Who, in such a case, would be responsible for all the evil that has been going on already for many years in our land ruled by the Bolsheviks headed by Stalin? The atom bomb, and all the other destructive means invented by modern technology, are indeed less dangerous than the *moral disintegration* which the highest representatives of the civil and church authorities have put into the Russian soul by their example. The breaking of the atom brings with it only physical devastation and destruction, whereas the *corruption of the mind, heart and will* entails the *spiritual death* of a whole nation, after which there is *no resurrection*."<sup>183</sup>

"So," continues Fr. Alexander, "if there are efforts in some places to raise a monument to Metropolitan (later Patriarch) Sergius in his birth city of Arzamas - it is perfectly understandable."

Of course, perfectly understandable. Just as it was perfectly understandable that the Soviets should have raised a monument to Judas Iscariot in the city of Tambov in 1919! Sin, as I said before, is always perfectly understandable. *But not excusable...*

"What matters is not Metropolitan Sergius himself - but the course of subservience to the atheistic government that needs to be condemned - and that was clearly and unequivocally done in the approved Joint Documents."

It was not. There was no study of what this subservience to the atheist government actually led the MP to, nor any unequivocal condemnation of it, but only "excuse for excuses in sins".

"Some critics of the process have brought out fiery denunciations of the Moscow Patriarchate by some of the renowned clerical representatives of the Church Abroad--all made during the time when the Church in the Soviet Union was under totalitarian oppression - as expressing the attitude that we must have toward the Moscow Patriarchate today. This is just the same as if one were to bring out fiery speeches made by the President or other political leaders of the United States during World War II denouncing Nazi Germany or Japan - and say that they reflect the attitude that we should have today toward the German or Japanese governments or people. At that time,

---

<sup>183</sup> I.M Andreyev, *Is the Grace of God present in the Soviet Church?* Wildwood, Alberta, pp. 32-33.

Germans and Japanese were demonized--and called "gooks" and "krauts" and other offensive names.

"Times change..."

Ah yes, that favoured argument of the Darwinists: *times change*. Just as the biological Darwinists, having failed to provide any direct evidence for evolution, resort to the "argument": "billions of years passed, and in that period new species *must* have evolved", so it is with the spiritual Darwinists. Times have changed, so the MP must have changed for the better.

But has it?

Fr. Alexander tries to show that both the MP has changed by a long series of statistics: "20,000 new churches! 600 new monasteries! 60 new seminaries and pastoral schools! Thousands of parochial schools! Thousands of religious newspapers, web sites, magazines, radio and television programs!" He even tells us how much more he rakes in from his parishioners in Los Angeles, as if his parish were already part of the MP!

All very impressive, but just what does it prove? *Nothing*, if all this external activity is not matched by inner holiness and the inner regeneration of the people. Of course, the possibility of such a regeneration cannot be excluded, and in fact several prophecies talk about the regeneration and resurrection of Russia – but only after the enthronement of a truly Orthodox tsar and the removal of almost all of the bishops of the official Orthodox Church.

But *now*, when polls show that fewer people believe in God in Russia than in America or Western Europe, and most of those who believe entertain all sorts of false beliefs and superstitions (especially prevalent is the belief in reincarnation and the idea that abortion is permissible), it is much more likely that it is the following prophecy of Bishop Theophan the Recluse that is being fulfilled: "Although the Christian name will be heard everywhere, and everywhere will be visible churches and ecclesiastical ceremonies, all this will be just appearances, and within there will be true apostasy. On this soil the Antichrist will be born..."<sup>184</sup> And the Antichrist, according to another prophecy of St. Seraphim of Sarov, will be a Jew born in Russia...

Fr. Alexander cites the following example in support of his thesis that the MP really has changed: "Archbishop Vikenty clearly states in his answers that women should not wear slacks. Period. Not just in Church, but anywhere..."

Well now, that is an achievement! And how typical of the pharisaical hierarchs of the MP, who strain at a gnat (slacks on a woman outside church) while swallowing many enormous camels! Thus as against this enthusiasm

---

<sup>184</sup> Bishop Theophan, *Tolkovanie na Vtoroe Poslanie sv. Apostola Pavla k Soluniam*, 2.3-5.

for getting women out of trousers, we can cite the following facts: the MP hierarchs are deeply immired in the pan-heresy of ecumenism; they kow-tow to the neo-Soviet government of the Freemason Putin in a disgracefully servile manner; they allow some priests to idolise Stalin publicly, and others to agitate for the glorification of Rasputin and Ivan the Terrible, and yet others to build sectarian communes that destroy families; they build churches on Mafia money and import alcohol and tobacco duty-free; they allow widespread homosexuality both amongst themselves and in the monasteries; they persecute and slander True Orthodox Christians and steal their property...

Enough said. The fact of the matter is that the shining cupolas and trouser-free churches of the MP hide an inner corruption and shamelessness that is frightening in its depth and extent. There has been *no* repentance, and what change there has been since the time of Metropolitan Sergius has been undoubtedly *for the worse*.

But one thing we can follow Fr. Alexander in congratulating them on: *they have survived*. Like the “fitter” species of the biological Darwinists, and like the “superior” races of the social Darwinists, they have survived by a process of natural selection – that is, by selecting *out* of their midst all the true confessors of the faith, and selecting *into* their midst assorted apostates, criminals, bouncers, KGB agents, sexual perverts and unscrupulous business men. And now, through the mouths of turncoats like Fr. Alexander, they are propounding the cardinal doctrine of spiritual Darwinism, otherwise known as Sergianism: *might is right!* We have the numbers, the money, the churches, and the political power, *therefore we are right*, and therefore you must join us on our terms or be cast ignominiously into the “dustbin of history”!

As in the original debates on Darwinism, we have to choose our ancestors, the race to which we wish to belong. “The question is this,” said Benjamin Disraeli in Oxford in 1864: “Is man an ape or an angel?” And we must answer with him: “My Lord, I am on the side of the angels.” That is, we are on the side of the martyrs and confessors who, living as if without bodies, confessed the truth of the Orthodox Faith even to the shedding of their blood. We are not on the side of the apes, the beast-like men who think only of physical survival, and of whom the Prophet-King David said: “Man, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them” (Psalm 48.21).

July 2/15, 2005.  
*Deposition of the Robe of the Most Holy Mother of God.*  
*St. Swithun, Bishop of Winchester.*

## 14. ON TRUE AND FALSE MARTYRS

The 20<sup>th</sup> canon of the Local Council of Gangra declares: "If anyone shall, from a presumptuous disposition, condemn and abhor the assembly [in honour of] the martyrs, or the services performed there, and the commemoration of them, let them be **anathema**...." And again, Canon 34 of the Council of Laodicea decrees: "No Christian shall forsake the martyrs of Christ, and turn to false martyrs, that is, to those of the heretics, or those who formerly were heretics; for they are aliens from God. Let those, therefore, who go after them, be **anathema**."

These canons show that the question of who is a true martyr is important to the Church, and getting the answer wrong carries a very severe penalty.

Unfortunately, Fr. John Shaw has got the answer wrong with regard to the new martyrs of Russia. Abandoning the criterion of the True Church, and adopting that of the neo-Soviet Moscow Patriarchate, he has argued that "the new Martyrs did not suffer 'for resisting the MP'."

Of course, the early martyrs up to the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927 did not suffer for resisting the MP, because the MP was Orthodox up to that time. But from 1927 a very large number of martyrs suffered *precisely* because of their resistance to the Sergianist MP. One example: Bishop Sergius of Buzuluk, who was martyred on May 3/16, 1930 by being thrown to hungry rats. He could have avoided this punishment if he had accepted Metropolitan Sergius. He refused, and so was killed.

The Jordanville publication *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* has over the years published a large number of articles by historians of the Church, such as I. Osipova and M. Shkarovsky, which document in detail the sufferings of those who were imprisoned, condemned and shot for belonging to "the counter-revolutionary monarchist organization, the True Orthodox Church". Only a few days ago I received its issue for July 15/28, 2005, which describes the sufferings of one such martyr, Hieromartyr Victorin of Petrograd. Now the True Orthodox Church, as everyone knows, was the Church which rejected Metropolitan Sergius and the MP; it was a separate organization from the MP precisely because it rejected the latter's claim to being Orthodox. So these Christians were martyred precisely for their resistance to the MP.

Shaw's reasons for his manifestly false thesis are strange and barely ecclesiastical.

First: "Virtually all the clergy under Metropolitan Sergius suffered the same fate as those who suffered." How does suffering the same fate as the true martyrs make you into a martyr if you do not share their *faith*?

Let us take a historical example. In Nero's persecution of the Church in the 60s of the first century, many Christians were martyred by crucifixion. Only a few years later, in 70 A.D., about a million Jews were crucified by the Roman army that conquered and destroyed Jerusalem. These Jews "shared the same fate" as the Christians, but can they be said to be martyrs because of that? Of course not. The Jews and the Christians were enemies, just as the True Orthodox and the Sergianists were enemies. And just as only the Christians, and not the Jews, won crowns for their sufferings, so only the True Orthodox, and not the Sergianists, won crowns for their sufferings.

Secondly: "In 1936, the main cathedral [in Odessa]... was destroyed, even though it was under Metropolitan Sergius."

And so? Jewish synagogues, Catholic churches, Protestant prayer houses and renovationist churches were also destroyed. In fact, there was a general persecution against *all* religion in the USSR. But does that mean that all those who went to any of these destroyed temples were martyrs, whatever their religion? Of course not... Again, let us recall the Jews, the *former* people of God, whose temple in which Christ Himself preached, was destroyed amid scenes of appalling carnage and suffering. They won no crowns for their suffering.

Thirdly: "Most of the thousands of New Martyrs did follow Metropolitan Sergius, but they still died for their faith." The antichristian Jews also died for their faith in 70 AD. So did the Jews and Catholics and Protestants and renovationists who perished in the gulags of the Soviet Union. But they won no crowns for their suffering...

The lesson from all this is: suffering alone, together with the name of Orthodox Christian, does not win a crown, unless that suffering has been within the True Church and for the sake of the True Faith.

The Sergianists did not have the True Faith. What faith, then did they have? That faith was expressed by Metropolitan Sergius in his infamous declaration, as well as in later statements. In essence it was the same faith as that of the renovationists, whom Patriarch Tikhon had anathematised in 1923 (let us remember that Metropolitan Sergius was a leading renovationist, as was the second Soviet "Patriarch", Alexis). This was the faith that the Soviet Union, the most explicitly antichristian State in history, the "collective Antichrist", which had been anathematised by the Church of Christ in 1918, was established by God and should be obeyed as such. It was the faith that Christians who did not accept this faith (the Catacomb Church, ROCOR) were worthy of defrocking and excommunication and of being denounced to the antichristian authorities as "counter-revolutionaries". In short, it was *the faith of Judas*.

"I will not give Thee a kiss as did Judas," we say just before receiving communion. But Sergius kissed Christ – in the persons of His true followers, the True Orthodox – in the same way as did Judas. He called the true bishops "Vladyko", "Master", and then handed them over to their murderers. It would have been better for that man if he had never been born...

"But not all the Sergianists betrayed the True Orthodox as did Sergius," one will object. True; but they followed Sergius, and shunned the True Orthodox, and in this way showed their agreement with Sergius and disagreement with the True Orthodox. They showed their faith – in Sergius and the rightness of his path – by their works – their following him.

Or perhaps they did not share Sergius' faith, and followed him only in order to avoid persecution, "only lest they should be persecuted for the Cross of Christ" (Galatians 6.12). That makes them marginally better than Sergius – but not worthy of crowns, of course. Little Judases rather than big ones...

But in fact there was not so much difference between the big Judases and the little ones. For the motivation that was common to almost all of them was the desire to save their skins. And if some had nobler motives, – perhaps the desire to save their families rather than themselves, – God is their judge, I do not judge them. But I cannot call them martyrs. Because they neither suffered with the martyrs nor for the faith of the martyrs.

Metropolitan Sergius made his pact with Stalin and Lucifer in order to preserve the physical existence of himself and the people who followed him – but mainly himself, since many of those who followed him, as Fr. John correctly points out, still died. And so, as St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco wrote: "The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius brought no benefit to the Church. The persecutions not only did not cease, but also sharply increased..."<sup>185</sup> Even a recent biography of Sergius by an MP author accepts this fact: "If Metropolitan Sergius, in agreeing in his name to publish the Declaration of 1927 composed by the authorities, hoping to buy some relief for the Church and the clergy, then *his hopes not only were not fulfilled, but the persecutions after 1927 became still fiercer, reaching truly hurricane-force in 1937-38.*"<sup>186</sup>

Let me give an example of how the faith of the True Orthodox and the faith of the Judas-Sergianists differed in the intertwining lives of Hieromartyr Sergius Mechiev and Sergianist Bishop Manuel of Orenburg.

---

<sup>185</sup> St. John Maximovich, *The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. A Short History*, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997, pp. 28-29.

<sup>186</sup> Sergius Fomin, *Strazh Doma Gospodnia (Guardian of the House of the Lord)*, Moscow, 2003, p. 262.



Protopresbyter Michael Polsky writes: "In essence, a huge majority of the Moscow churches belonged to the secret adherents of Fr. Sergius Mechiev. Among them,... the proclamations of the Soviet government were not followed."

On October 29, 1929, Fr. Sergius was arrested and exiled to the northern town of Kadnikov for his refusal to accept Metropolitan Sergius' declaration. He was released in 1937 and began to serve in secret.

Once, being without a bishop, Fr. Sergius followed the advice of one of his spiritual sons and opened his heart to Bishop Manuel Lemeshevsky, and in confidence explained to him his church position, thinking that he shared his views. Bishop Manuel was soon arrested, and betrayed Fr. Sergius. During questioning at his trial, the arrested hierarch said that Fr. Sergius was the main instigator of the opposition to Metropolitan Sergius. He also said that he wished to be a loyal Soviet citizen and wanted no trouble. The prosecutor tapped him on the shoulder and said:

"Don't worry and be upset, Vladyka: you will be of some use to us later."

After this, he was released and was given the diocese of Orenburg by Metropolitan Sergius... So he was of some use to the Soviets... But Fr. Sergius was shot in 1941...

Both men suffered, both suffered for their faith. Manuel suffered for his faith in Sergius, and because "he wished to be a loyal citizen and wanted no trouble". Hieromartyr Sergius suffered for his faith in Christ...

Fr. John's attempt to place a mark of equality between the true martyrs and the Judases is not his own strategy: it is that of the MP, which in 2000 "canonised" a long list of true martyrs and false ones. It canonised the true ones because their holiness in many cases could not be concealed even though they condemned the MP and died outside it. For example, Hieromartyr Victor of Glazov, whose relics are incorrupt and wonderworking, and who said that Metropolitan Sergius' betrayal was "worse than heresy"... And it canonised the false ones because it had to pretend that you could be a Sergianist and a martyr. In this way the MP fulfilled a prophecy made several years ago by the ROCOR priest Fr. Oleg Oreshkin: "I think that some of those glorified will be from the sergianists so as to deceive the believers. 'Look,' they will say, 'he is a saint, a martyr, in the Heavenly Kingdom, and he recognized the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, so you must be reconciled with it and its fruits.' This will be done not in order to glorify martyrdom for Christ's sake, but in order to confirm the sergianist politics."<sup>187</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> "Ierei o. Oleg otvechaet na voprosy redaktsii", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 23 (1452), December 1/14, 1991, p. 7.

Of course, canonising true and false martyrs together has absurd consequences. For example, the KGB Patriarch Alexis wrote: "I believe that our martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for us." Then in another publication the same Patriarch Alexis stated that the Russian Church Abroad was a schismatic church, and added: "Equally uncanonical is the so-called "Catacomb" Church." In other words, he recognized the martyrs of the Catacomb Church, many of whom were betrayed to the godless authorities by Metropolitan Sergius' church organization., and at the same time declares that these martyrs were schismatic and uncanonical!"<sup>188</sup>

As the Kaliningrad parish of ROCOR wrote on November 1/14, 2000: "What throng of new martyrs was canonized by the Moscow Patriarchate if, in that multitude, there are "saints" who fought against the Church, and who later suffered at the hands of their masters - but not for Christ, having become, rather, victims who were offered up upon the altar of the revolution, just as were thousands of other bolsheviks and liberal dreamers? A throng of new martyrs in which victims and executioners, holy martyrs and "Christians" (at whose orders these new martyrs were shot and sent to prisons and labour-camps), find themselves side by side?"

That the patriarchate's canonisation of even the true martyrs is not pleasing to God was demonstrated when 50 patriarchal bishops uncovered the relics of Patriarch Tikhon in the Donskoj cemetery on April 5, 1992. Witnesses reported that "it was even possible to recognise the face of the Patriarch from his incorrupt visage, and his mantia and mitre were also preserved in complete incorruption. Witnesses also speak about a beautiful fragrance and an unusual feeling of reverential peace at that moment. But then, as some patriarchal clerics confirm, on contact with the air the relics crumbled, or - as the Catacomb Christians remark - the relics were not given into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate. Then they buried them in plaster - a blasphemous act from an Orthodox point of view..."

This act of canonising both the true and the false martyrs has further absurd consequences. First, it means that, if any one was still tempted to consider that the official acts of the MP had any validity at all, he can now be assured that even the MP itself does not believe in them. For consider: Archbishop Victor, Metropolitan Cyril and the whole host of Catacomb confessors were defrocked, excommunicated and cast out of the community of the "faithful" by official acts of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod. But if these "defrocked" and "excommunicated" people are now saints in the Heavenly Kingdom, this only goes to show, *as the MP now implicitly admits*, that the actions of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod were completely uncanonical and invalid!

---

<sup>188</sup> Perecrestov, "Why Now?" *Orthodox Life*, vol. 44, № 6, November-December, 1994, p. 44.

Secondly, it also shows that *the MP does not know what martyrdom is, and looks upon it in an essentially ecumenist spirit which deprives it of all meaning.* Some years ago, a writer for the *Anglican Church Times* was reviewing a book on the “martyrs” of the Anglican Reformation. In the spirit of that ecumenism that has been at the root of Anglicanism for centuries, this reviewer claimed that both the Catholics who died for their faith at the hands of the Anglicans and the Anglicans who died for their faith at the hands of the Catholics died for the truth as they saw it and so were martyrs! For it was not important, wrote the reviewer, who was *right* in this conflict: the only thing that matters is that they were *sincere* in their beliefs. And he went on to deny that heresy in general even exists: the only real heresy, he said, is the belief that there is such a thing as heresy!

The act of the MP presupposes a very similar philosophy. It presupposes that you can be a martyr whether you oppose the Antichrist or submit to him, whether you confess the truth or lie through your teeth, whether you imitate the love of Christ or the avarice of Judas. The perfect philosophy for our lukewarm times!

If the Lord Himself spews such lukewarmness out of His mouth, then so should we. And if the anathema on those who venerate false martyrs does not frighten us, let us at least pay heed to the words of St. Paul: “If a man strive for mastery, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully” (II Timothy 2.5). And to the words of the Lord left by Metropolitan Philaret of New York in his typewriter just before he died: “Holy fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3.11).

*October 12/25, 2005.*

## 15. THE CANONICAL POSITION OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH ABROAD

In reply to accusations that some people are “rewriting the history of the Church Abroad”, Fr. Alexander Lebedev has said<sup>189</sup> that he would appreciate hearing some substantive comments on a text of the ROCOR Synod of 1966 relating to the canonical status of ROCOR.<sup>190</sup> This article is an attempt to provide such a commentary.

“What shall we say about the canonical status of the Russian Church Abroad?” begins the quoted text.

“First of all, that she may exist only on condition of horrible persecution of the Russian Church in the USSR on the part of militant atheists, who have set themselves the aim of totally annihilating the Church and striving by all means to achieve this.

“Under normal conditions of life, we repeat once again, an *independent* state of existence of a part of the Russian Church outside the borders of Russia would be *impossible* and *unthinkable*. But even now there is a limit to this (i.e. independent) existence - the cessation of persecutions of the Church and her freedom in Russia.

“From this we conclude, that the existence of the Russian Church Abroad is a *temporary* phenomenon, *conditional upon* persecutions of the Russian Church. If you like, *an abnormal* condition.” (p. 61).

I find nothing controversial in this text - nor anything that would help to resolve the conflict between those in favour and those against the union of ROCOR with the Moscow Patriarchate. In fact, it is strictly *irrelevant* to that conflict.

Let me explain...

\*

There is no question that the original foundation of the Church Abroad in 1921 was caused by the persecution of the Russian Church inside Bolshevik-controlled Russia, and that from a canonical point of view, this persecution constituted the only possible justification for the independent existence of the Church Abroad on the territory of other Autocephalous Churches *at that time* (the significance of this qualification: “at that time” will become clear later).

---

<sup>189</sup> On the “Paradosis” discussion group on October 29, 2005.

<sup>190</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, April-June, 1966.

The canonical argument was expounded by Fr. George Grabbe, who cited the example of the flight from persecution of the bishops of the Church of Cyprus to the Hellespont, where they were allowed to retain their independent Church organisation by the Sixth Ecumenical Council. The MP claims (or claimed in the past) that the ROCOR hierarchs fled from their flocks out of cowardice, so that their re-establishment of diocesan administrations outside Russia was uncanonical. However, it is not forbidden for a bishop to flee in all circumstances, and the Lord Himself said to His apostles: “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another” (Matthew 10.23) – which is precisely what they did during the persecution under the Emperor Claudius (Acts 11.19). Moreover, the MP ignores the rather important fact that the bishops did not flee *away from* their flock, *but in pursuit of* them, as it were, in order to provide spiritual nourishment in their own language and culture to hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Of course, the ROCOR bishops could do this only so long as the Autocephalous Churches on whose territory they settled blessed them to do so. This blessing they did not obtain from the Ecumenical Patriarchate (which is why the Higher Church Administration, the forerunner of ROCOR, left Constantinople in 1920), but did obtain from the Serbian, Alexandrian and Jerusalem Patriarchates. As for the territories of North and South America, Western Europe, China and Australia, these did not “belong” to any Autocephalous Church, and so the ROCOR bishops were able to settle there without transgressing the bounds of any other Church.

Having said all that, there is no doubt that the idea of a part of one Local Church having jurisdiction in almost every corner of the world *except* its own Homeland (Point 1 of the Polozhenie of ROCOR) – that is, a quasi-global jurisdiction that depended for its canonicity on its link with Russia, the only land in which it could have *no* jurisdiction – was canonically unprecedented. It could only be supported on the following conditions: (1) that the ROCOR bishops were intending to return to their sees within Russia at the first opportunity, and (2) the canonical link with the Church inside Russia was maintained. The fulfilment of both these conditions came under threat quite soon in ROCOR’s existence, from the late 1920s.

First, the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War, and the consolidation of their power in the years that followed, meant that a return to Russia became less and less feasible. In some cases, the sees of ROCOR bishops were no longer within the boundaries of Russia or the USSR – for example, Archbishop Anastasy’s see of Kishinev, which became part of Romania. In other cases, the flocks of the ROCOR bishops put down roots in the countries of the emigration. So if they were to look after their flocks, the bishops would have to stay with them. The upshot was that a canonical position that was de jure temporary was rapidly becoming de facto permanent.

Secondly, the canonical link with the Church inside Russia became, if not weaker, at any rate *less visible* from 1927, when ROCOR broke communion with the Synod created by Metropolitan Sergius because of the latter's submission of himself and his Church administration to the power of the militant atheists in his notorious "Declaration". From now on, the canonical link with the Church inside Russia on which ROCOR's canonical status depended could only be with those bishops who separated from Metropolitan Sergius – in other words, with the Catacomb Church. Until 1937, ROCOR commemorated Metropolitan Peter, the locum tenens of the patriarchal throne, who was certainly closer in spirit to ROCOR than to Metropolitan Sergius. But after Metropolitan Peter's martyric death in October, 1937, and those of Metropolitans Cyril and Joseph in November of that year, ROCOR had no leading bishop to commemorate, and so resorted to commemorating "the persecuted episcopate of the Russian Church". As time passed, although Catacomb bishops continued to exist right until the fall of communism in 1991 and beyond, they were not known to ROCOR. Nor were they known to many Catacomb priests inside Russia, which is why many of these priests started commemorating Metropolitan Anastasy, first hierarch of ROCOR, albeit without his knowledge. And in 1977 Metropolitan Philaret, Metropolitan Anastasy's successor, received fourteen Catacomb hieromonks inside Russia under his omophorion.

So from 1977 at the latest the canonical relationship between ROCOR and the True Church inside Russia began to be reversed: instead of ROCOR basing its canonical status on its links with the bishops *inside* Russia, part of the clergy of the Church inside Russia was basing its canonical status (expressed in the formula of commemoration at the Liturgy) on its links with the bishops *outside* Russia. Clearly, as with the original Polozhenie of ROCOR, this was an unprecedented situation from a canonical point of view. Unprecedented, but not for that reason unjustified; for the spirit, if not the letter of the canons was being preserved, insofar as the commemoration of Metropolitan Philaret enabled priests of the Russian Church inside Russia to remain in mystical communion with the only rightly confessing hierarch and Synod known to them, and thereby *out* of communion with the heretical bishops of the MP.

Justified though this arrangement was, it clearly required a reworking of ROCOR's Polozhenie. For, on the one hand, ROCOR's situation outside Russia was *permanent* – it was no longer a Church "in exile", implying an imminent return to the Homeland, since its bishops were clearly not going to pack their bags and return to Russia even if communism fell the next day. And on the other hand, it was now a truly global Church – the first in Orthodox history – having jurisdiction on almost every continent, and within as well as outside of Russia.

However, as far as I know, no reworking of ROCOR's Polozhenie was undertaken. Even when ROCOR began receiving whole parishes inside Russia in 1990, and started consecrating bishops for them, the need for a reworking of ROCOR's canonical status was apparently not felt, or not felt to be urgent. The only significant change was that, for a short period in the early 1990s, ROCOR started calling itself the *only* Church of Russia, both for those living inside and those living outside it. However, this change was unacceptable, not only because it contradicted the first point of ROCOR's Polozhenie, which, as we have seen, decreed that ROCOR had no jurisdiction *inside* Russia, but also because it contradicted Patriarch Tikhon's ukaz no. 362 of November 7/20, 1920, the second canonical pillar of ROCOR's existence, which blessed the existence of different autonomous groups of bishops in the event of the absence of a central ecclesiastical authority – by which authority a canonically elected Patriarch and Synod was clearly meant. The change was considered unacceptable for another, less worthy reason: because a majority of the bishops of ROCOR were coming round to the view that the *only* Church of Russia was not in fact ROCOR, but the MP...

\*

It should be noted that what has been stated above in no way strengthens the case for ROCOR joining the MP, because at no time in ROCOR's history has the Church inside Russia with which ROCOR has considered itself in communion been the Sergianist MP, but rather the "Tikhonite" MP before 1927 and the Catacomb Church after 1927. Differences of opinion have existed over whether the MP did or did not have the grace of sacraments, and over the degree and depth of the corruption within it. But at no time was ROCOR in communion with the MP, and at no time did it consider that its patriarchs were the canonical successors of Patriarch Tikhon.

However, Fr. Alexander would have us believe that the mere cessation of persecution of the faith in 1991 (or thereabouts) was sufficient reason for rushing into communion with the MP. But this is illogical, unecclesiastical thinking. The MP was not made better or worse by the purely political event of the cessation of persecution - assuming it has indeed come to an end, which ROCOR parishes inside Russia deny (and with reason!). If the MP was uncanonical before 1991, it did not suddenly become canonical in 1991 just because the red flag was lowered over the Kremlin. Everything depended on how the MP reacted to the changed political situation, on whether it repented of its sins and heresies and sought admission to the True Church in that spirit, or stubbornly continued in its old ways.

I have argued in several articles that the MP has not only has not repented of its sins and heresies: it has actually substantially added to them since 1991. But that is not the point I wish to stress here. The point I wish to make is that the alleged cessation of persecution, while it might make some difference to

ROCOR's perception of herself and her future role inside and outside of Russia (although the situation, as we saw in the last section, is complicated), is strictly irrelevant to the question whether or not the MP since 1991 is a canonical Church.

I shall now quote at some length from Fr. Alexander himself in an article of his dating to 1987 to show that when considering the question of the MP, he, too, *at that time* did not mention the presence or absence of persecution, but rather much more relevant matters, such as Sergianism:-

"The [ROCOR] Synod cannot and will not have anything to do with the Moscow Patriarchate and will not recognize its authority as long as the Moscow Patriarchate continues its two great sins: its slavish subservience to the militant atheist government, and its refusal to speak the truth about the persecution of the Church. [Why not also the great sin of ecumenism? However, we shall pass this omission over for the time being...]

"On the first question, the Moscow Patriarchate violates the very essence of the Church, which is based on the concept of truth. Our Lord said that there can be no concord of truth with falsehood, as there can be no concord of light with darkness. By making itself subservient to the Godless regime under which it exists, the Moscow Patriarchate is accepting falsehood as its ruling principle. When we remember how strongly the hierarchs of the Russian Church of the past stood up in defense of the Church before those in power (for example, Metropolitan Philip before Tsar Ivan IV or St. Mitrophan before Tsar Peter I) and then see the current hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate calmly spouting the line set by the communist party, we see how far they have gone on the path of falsehood. This slavish obedience to the party line is also the root of the ecumenical adventures of the Moscow Patriarchate, since they are needed by the party for the purpose of international propaganda. [Good – something about ecumenism. And yet it should be given greater emphasis.]

"On the second question, the sin of the Moscow Patriarchate is even greater – by denying any persecution of the Church, the Moscow Patriarchate turns its back on the tens of millions of the New Martyrs of Russia. By ignoring the cry of their blood, the Moscow Patriarchate shows itself unworthy of their sacrifice. And by denying this sacrifice and aligning itself with the persecutors of the Church of Christ, the Moscow Patriarchate shares the burden of responsibility for these terrible deeds.

"The Synod will never change its views on this. It considers itself the only free voice of the Russian Church, and it will never cease its denunciations of the Moscow Patriarchate. [Never say "never" ...]



"The Synod continues to keep in force the policy of Metropolitan Anastassy forbidding not only joint prayer with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, but even casual contact. But, as declared by Metropolitan Anastassy himself, the final judge of the Moscow Patriarchate can only be a freely convened All-Russian Council, representing all the Bishops in the homeland and abroad, including the voice of all the confessor bishops languishing in Soviet prisons and concentration camps or hiding in secret catacombs. Until such a Council, free of any political pressure, is convened, the Synod will not make any changes in its positions regarding the Moscow Patriarchate."<sup>191</sup>

Here, in Fr. Alexander's own words, we come to the real answer to our question: *whether and how ROCOR returns to Russia or into communion with any other Russian jurisdictions is not to be determined by political events, such as the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, but only as the result of a freely convened All-Russian Council, including all the Catacomb and True Orthodox Russian bishops, which has not yet taken place.* Why, then, is Fr. Alexander not agitating for the convening of such a Council? First, because, as he well knows, no Council in which the majority of bishops belong to the MP can possibly be "the final judge of the Moscow Patriarchate", for then the defendants will be the judges in their own case, contrary to all judicial procedure, both secular and ecclesiastical. Secondly, because the godfather or convener of any such Council in present conditions will be KGB agent Colonel Putin, who, far from judging his KGB comrades in the Moscow Patriarchate, justifies them in every way and will certainly not allow them to be judged by "anti-Soviet elements". And thirdly because any such Council will have excluded in advance – with the full cooperation of ROCOR as well as the MP – all those Russian bishops who, unlike ROCOR itself, "never cease in [their] denunciations of the Moscow Patriarchate" – that is, the Seraphimo-Gennadiites, the Lazarites, ROAC and ROCiE.

For the uncomfortable fact is that *Russia is still ruled by the KGB* (now called the FSB) – and especially since KGB Colonel Putin came to power. For, as the intelligence expert Constantine Preobrazhensky writes, "the FSB is a restored KGB of the Soviet epoch. After the democratic reforms of the 1990s the KGB officers managed to get everything back. All the Directorates of the Soviet KGB are reunited now in today's FSB, except two of them: the First, which managed intelligence, and the Ninth, which guarded the highest Communist bureaucrats. Both are formally independent, but keep close connections with the FSB... The former First Chief Directorate of the KGB is now called the Foreign Intelligence Service. It is successfully managing the operation 'ROCOR'"<sup>192</sup> – that is, the absorption of ROCOR into the MP.<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> Lebedev, "Second Open Letter to Fr. Nektas Palassis", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 37, № 2, March-April, 1987, p. 31.

<sup>192</sup> Preobrazhensky, "Ecumenism and Intelligence".

<sup>193</sup> Preobrazhensky, "Hostile Absorption of ROCOR".

If we are talking about political conditions facilitating or making difficult the union of ROCOR with the MP, then this continuing rule by the KGB is surely the most important factor, not the presence or absence of crude and large-scale persecution. If the KGB continues to rule Russia, then the KGB continues to rule the MP. And if the KGB continues to rule the KGB, the Moscow Patriarchate continues to “violate the very essence of the Church, which is based on the concept of truth”, in Fr. Alexander’s words. And that is why it continues to participate in the ecumenical movement, “the heresy of heresies”, in the words of Fr. Alexander’s cast-off first hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly. For it is “this slavish obedience to the party line [that] is also the root of the ecumenical adventures of the Moscow Patriarchate, since they are needed by the party for the purpose of international propaganda” – and international espionage, as Preobrazhensky has explained.

\*

To summarise:-

While the persecution of the faith in Russia was the original reason for the creation of ROCOR as an independent ecclesiastical organisation, there very soon appeared other, and still stronger reasons.

These reasons included: (a) ROCOR’s sending down roots in the countries of the emigration, making it no longer an “exile” Church; (b) the apostasy of the official Church inside Russia, making a return to Russia problematic even in the event of the fall of communism; and (c) the present-day impossibility, in the conditions of Putin’s Russia, of convening a truly free and representative Council that would judge the apostasy of the official Church, the essential condition for the flourishing of true Church life in the country. In a deeper sense, therefore, the persecution of the faith continues, making the continued independence of ROCOR both possible and necessary from a canonical and dogmatic point of view.

Finally, I should like to draw attention to an element of the holy tradition of ROCOR that the present fever for union with Moscow has obscured: the fact that, as St. John of Kronstadt said, “without a Tsar Russia is stinking corpse”. Without the restoration of the True Orthodox Tsardom to Russia a true spiritual regeneration is unthinkable – nobody in his right mind can think that KGB Colonel Putin or anyone appointed by him for “holy anointing” could be the Tsar Russia so desperately needs. Only a True Orthodox Tsar raised to power by God Himself will be able to cleanse the Church by convening the free and representative Church Council discussed above.

That Tsar and that Council will come. For, as Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava said: “I do not speak from myself. But that which I have heard from

the God-inspired elders, that I have passed on... The Lord will have mercy on Russia for the sake of the small remnant of true believers. In Russia, the elders said, in accordance with the will of the people, the Monarchy, Autocratic power, will be re-established. The Lord has forechosen the future Tsar. He will be a man of fiery faith, having the mind of a genius and a will of iron. First of all he will introduce order in the Orthodox Church, removing all the untrue, heretical and lukewarm hierarchs. And many, very many - with few exceptions, all - will be deposed, and new, true, unshakeable hierarchs will take their place. He will be of the family of the Romanovs according to the female line. Russia will be a powerful state, but only for 'a short time'... And then the Antichrist will come into the world, with all the horrors of the end as described in the Apocalypse...."

*October 19 / November 1, 2005.*

*St. John of Kronstadt.*

*Canonisation of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.*

## **16. "OIKONOMIA" AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE**

In a report to the Conference on the History of the Russian Church in November, 2002 entitled "The Ecclesiastical Principle of oikonomia and ROCOR under Metropolitan Anastassy" (now on the ROCOR website), Nun Vassa (Larin) has, without saying so explicitly, sought to justify ROCOR's unia with the MP on the basis of an examination of Metropolitan Anastassy's use of oikonomia in the period 1938 to 1962. In this article I propose to examine her argument in some detail.

Both at the beginning and at the end of the report, Nun Vassa quotes MP authors declaring that canon law as presently formulated is unable to resolve the problems of the Russian Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This immediately sets one on one's guard; for what, if not the dogmatic and canonical inheritance of the Church, can serve as a basis for the resolution of her problems? Nun Vassa's answer to this question appears to be: oikonomia, understood not as a certain weakening of the strictness of canon law, that is, as the opposite of *akriveia*, but rather in its original sense as God's "house-building", that is, the administration and building up of the Church on the basis of love for the sake of the salvation of souls.

I have no quarrel with Nun Vassa's definition of oikonomia, and therefore pass over the first half of her report, coming straight to her much more controversial application of Metropolitan Anastassy's supposed practice of oikonomia.

It should be pointed out, first, that whatever the rights or wrongs of Metropolitan Anastassy's practice in this period, as Nun Vassa describes it, it did not correspond to the practice either of Metropolitan Anthony before him, at the beginning of the Sergianist schism, nor, still more clearly, of Metropolitan Philaret after him, nor of the majority of the hierarchs of the Catacomb Church of Russia. Therefore it is impossible to identify Metropolitan Anastassy's course as *the* one and unchanging course of ROCOR, still less of the True Russian Church as a whole. And in fact Nun Vassa provides no argument that it is; for she does not contrast Metropolitan Anastassy's course with those of his predecessor or successors, nor attempt to explain or justify the differences. It may well be possible to explain these differences; for the whole essence of oikonomia is a certain flexibility in relation to changing circumstances. But the point I wish to make here is that, even if such changes of course could be justified, Nun Vassa has not in fact done so. And this is important; for if we are to draw any conclusion in relation to the present proposed ROCOR-MP unia, we *must* explain these differences. Too often people say such things as: "Metropolitan Cyril said this in 1929, so we must take exactly the same attitude in 2005," completely forgetting (if it is only a failure of memory involved) to mention that Metropolitan Cyril said something considerably different in 1937, when

circumstances had changed, and would almost certainly have something different again in 2005, when circumstances have again changed – almost out of all recognition.

Another preliminary point that needs to be made is that the material Nun Vassa uses is not fairly representative even of Metropolitan Anastassy's views and actual practice.

Let us now look at some of this material, under Nun Vassa's headings.

### **1. The Attitude of Metropolitan Anastassy to other Jurisdictions Abroad**

In relation to the American Metropolia Metropolitan Anastassy said in ROCOR's 1953 Hierarchical Council: "They do not have the fullness of truth, they deviate, but this does not mean that they are without grace. We must maintain objective calm with regard to them. We must strive for such unity on the same fundamental concepts of the Temporary Regulations upon which we stand today. Yet it is fair to say that all unity begins with personal contact: Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess. But we seem to regret that the keenness of jurisdictional quarreling has been dulled. But our goal is unity. Certain boundaries were needed as for disciplinary purposes. Now, when many extremes were abandoned in the American Metropoliate, we still sharpen the question and speak of them as heretics with whom we can have no contact. Bishop Nikon said that we are very weak. This is not quite true. But externally, we are weaker than our opponents, who have money and the press on their side. The battlefield is not even. If we elevate the conflict, a very difficult situation will arise."

So the metropolitan was advocating retaining contacts and not "elevating the conflict" because the position of ROCOR from an external point of view was weak. It is arguable whether this was the right policy at that time. Perhaps it could be justified in view of the fact that the Metropolia had not yet been absorbed into the MP. However, the important point is that ROCOR later abandoned it – when the Metropolia was absorbed into the MP. Thus in 1971 the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR under Metropolitan Philaret declared: "Viewing this illicit act with sorrow, and acknowledging it to be null and void, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, which has hitherto not abandoned hope for the restoration of ecclesiastical unity in America, sees in the declaration of American autocephaly a step which will lead the American Metropolia yet farther away from the ecclesiastical unity of the Church of Russia. Perceiving therein a great sin against the enslaved and suffering Church of Russia, the Council of Bishops *DECIDES*: henceforth, neither the clergy nor the laity [of the Russian Church Abroad] are to have communion in prayer or the divine services with the hierarchy or clergy of the American Metropolia."

So here we have a clear example of a *change of course* in response to changing circumstances. Oikonomia in the sense of a weakening of the strict letter of the canons in relation to the schismatics of the American Metropolia was no longer felt to be applicable; they were now to be treated as schismatics. But this is fully consistent with oikonomia in Nun Vassa's sense, that is, the administration of the Church in love for the salvation of souls.

"These last words," comments Nun Vassa, "reflect the great sobriety and foresight of Metropolitan Anastassy's prudence, which, without wandering irresponsibly in ponderings of love, has in view the real situation of the Church and takes measures to thwart certain dangers. Metropolitan Anastassy stresses the destructiveness of the printed word for the Church in certain cases, mentioning the press, and in particular the articles in *Pravoslavnyaya Rus'* that irritate its opponents. The importance of avoiding sharpening enmity, first and foremost through the printed word, for the sake of ecclesiastical constructiveness probably has great meaning at the present time for the *oikonomia* of the Russian Church. It is interesting to ponder whether Metropolitan Anastassy would say now about the Moscow Patriarchate what he said in 1953 about the Metropoliate: 'Now, when in [the Moscow Patriarchate], many extremes were abandoned, we still sharpen the question and speak of them as heretics with whom we can have no contact.'"

Well, we know exactly what Metropolitan Anastassy said about the MP. He did *not* repeat what he had said with reference to the Metropolia: "It is fair to say that all unity begins with personal contact". On the contrary, in 1957, in his last will and testament, he said: "As regards the Moscow Patriarchate and its hierarchs, then, so long as they continue in close, active and benevolent cooperation with the Soviet Government, which openly professes its complete godlessness and strives to implant atheism in the entire Russian nation, then the Church Abroad, maintaining her purity, must not have any canonical, liturgical, or even simply external communion with them whatsoever, leaving each one of them at the same time to the final judgement of the Sobor of the future free Russian Church..."

Again, on October 18, 1959, in his address at the opening of the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR, he said: "We must not only teach others, but ourselves also fulfil [that which we teach], following the examples of the Moscow saints whom we have commemorated today. They stand before us as Orthodox zealots, and we must follow their example, turning aside completely from the dishonesty of those who have now occupied their throne. Oh if they could but arise, they not only would not recognise any of their successors, but rather would turn against them with severe condemnation. With what zeal would St. Philip be set aflame against the weak-in-faith representatives of the Church, who look with indifference at the flowing of the innocent blood of their flock, and yet do not condemn the enemies of the Church, but try in every way to flatter the atheistic authority. How the great

adamantine St. Hermogen would have arisen in righteous indignation, seeing the hierarchy remaining deceitfully silent at a time when atheist propaganda is being widely disseminated, forgetting that by their silence they are betraying God. Let us in every way turn aside from them, but at the same time let us arm ourselves with apostolic zeal. *We must avoid every kind of contact with them like the plague.* You know that these people with their thoroughly burned consciences will never cease to wage war against us, although they constantly change their methods of warfare.”

In the 1953 Council, according to Nun Vassa, Metropolitan Anastassy “touches upon the question of concelebration with those jurisdictions (the American and Parisian)—and here, one can say, he ‘taps on the brakes.’ Feeling that the time for full liturgical communion had not yet arrived, Metropolitan Anastassy stressed that in the area of the Sacraments, a ‘broad view’ cannot be without its limits, although in certain circumstances he saw the possibility of leniency for the sake of the good of the Church, that is, for *oikonomia*. ‘It is fairly said that a broad viewpoint cannot be unlimited and uncontrolled. One must set certain standards. There was the question of concelebration. At the last Council, this question remained unresolved. But it turned out that sometimes such contact was unavoidable for the sake of the good of the Church. We must establish limits to such communion. Since ancient times, the concelebration of Liturgy was considered more important than that of molebens and pannikhidas. It must be decided whether the time has come for full communion or not. The President thinks that the time has not yet come, from the point of view of either side. Metropolitan Leonty often says this himself. Prayerful communion is possible, but with discernment. Until now, priests have been allowed to concelebrate with priests. The time for concelebration between bishops has hardly come yet, having the ‘little ones’ in mind” (*ibid*).

“In these last words we see an interesting example of acrivia for the sake of oikonomia, that is, non-concelebration for the sake of the good of the ‘little ones,’ who might be troubled by such an act. In the post-war period, inter-jurisdictional passions were of course well-stoked, so concelebration with other jurisdictions would hardly have incurred sympathy within the flock.”

Nun Vassa’s concept of acrivia - that is, strictness in the application of the canons - is very strange here! How can it be “strict” practice to allow communion at the level of the priesthood with condemned heretics?! For condemned heretics is exactly what the Parisians were (and are) - and condemned, moreover, not only by ROCOR under Metropolitan Anthony, but also by the MP under Metropolitan Sergius).

Let us recall the historical facts.

On January 13/26, 1927 the ROCOR Synod suspended Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris and his vicar bishops pending an ecclesiastical trial that was to take place at the next Council. On January 22 / February 4, the Synod sent a circular letter to all the parishes in the Diocese of Western Europe in which it announced its decision of January 13/26 and exhorted the faithful not to commune with the suspended Metropolitan, bearing in mind that the validity of the Mysteries received might be placed in doubt.

On August 26 / September 8, the Council of Bishops convened an Episcopal Tribunal comprising twelve bishops to judge the case of Eulogius. He was condemned, and the Act of Sentence read, in part: "Every liturgical function performed by him is devoid of grace, the Mysteries administered by him are not Mysteries, and the ordinations he performs are anticanonical."

The Council again appealed to the vacillating clergy of the Western European diocese, threatening them with canonical penalties if they did not submit to the conciliar decision. Archbishop Seraphim, in the name of the Council, wrote a declaration to all the faithful of the Western European diocese that "it is absolutely forbidden, under pain of excommunication for schism, to remain in prayerful communion with Metropolitan Eulogius, Archbishop Vladimir, Bishop Sergius and their clergy, since the Mysteries administered by them are devoid of benefit."

In 1935, Metropolitan Eulogius was reconciled with ROCOR. But he never renounced the sophianist heresy of his priest, Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, which was officially condemned by both ROCOR and the MP in 1935. Moreover, he again broke communion with ROCOR and eventually joined Constantinople.

At ROCOR's 1956 Council, continues Nun Vassa, Metropolitan Anastassy "apparently rejected the notion expressed in 1953 that 'certain standards' for concelebration needed to be made. In response to the comment made by Bishop Leonty of Chile that Evlogians were to be dealt with [in the same way] as members of the Living Church [obnovlentsy], and that 'no concelebrations' could be allowed, 'The President explains that the obnovlentsy are another matter. They are in essence heretics. But attitudes towards them changed in different periods. When they weakened, greater condescension was employed in the practice of receiving them. The Church behaved this way in the past, too. We are not talking about the obnovlentsy in this case. The principle of oikonomia was always adhered to in the Church. Its goal is to save the person, not push him away. No law or rule can envelop all the multitude of circumstances of ecclesiastical practice. That is why the principle of ecclesiastical oikonomia was established, that is, of ecclesiastical benefit. That is why each bishop must be guided in difficult circumstances by this principle'."



This is confusing. Is Nun Vassa asserting that Metropolitan Anastassy no longer considered the Evlogians to be heretics, and that concelebration with them, in his opinion, was now permissible, not only at the priestly, but even at the episcopal level? Or only that he considered that Evlogians could be received back into the True Church more leniently than before, in accordance with the principle of oikonomia? In either case, we need to know what considerations motivated the metropolitan in departing to some degree from his position of only three years earlier, and to a large degree from his position, and the position of his predecessor, Metropolitan Anthony, in 1927 and 1935. Moreover, we are given no reasons why Bishop Leontius' perfectly reasonable comments should simply be dismissed.

The fact is that not only did ROCOR *not* follow the course apparently suggested by Metropolitan Anastassy, but his successor, Metropolitan Philaret, advocated adopting a stronger position, in accordance with Bishop Leontius' view: "I do not agree with our practice of halfway relations with the American and Parisian schismatics. The Holy Fathers insistently state that long and obdurately continuing schism is close to being heresy, and that it is necessary to relate to stubborn schismatics as to heretics, not allowing any communion with them whatsoever..."<sup>194</sup>

This shows, once again, that Metropolitan Anastassy's attitude to the Parisians was not in accord with the policies either of his predecessor or of his successor. But more importantly, it shows that when it comes to communion with condemned heretics there can be no question of acrivia or oikonomia: *any form or degree of communion is simply forbidden*. The question of the application of acrivia or oikonomia arises only in relation to the method of receiving repentant heretics into the True Church: whether to receive them strictly (by the first or second rite) or with condescension (the third rite), which question may be resolved in different ways at different times, depending on changing circumstances and tactical considerations.

## **2. The Attitude of Metropolitan Anastassy to the MP**

Nun Vassa quotes the following from the Protocols of ROCOR's 1938 Council: "DISCUSSED: concelebration with the clergymen of the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod. METROPOLITAN ANASTASSY points out that clergymen arriving from Russia from this jurisdiction are immediately admitted into prayerful communion, and refers to the opinion of Metropolitan Kirill of Kazan in his epistle, published in *Tserkovnaya Zhizn'* [*Church Life*], that Metropolitan Sergius' sin does not extend to the clergymen under him. DECREED: To recognize that there are no obstacles to prayerful communion and concelebration with clergymen of Metropolitan Sergius."

---

<sup>194</sup> Metropolitan Philaret to Fr. George Grabbe, July 12/25, 1975, *Vertograd-Inform*, № 11 (68), November, 2000, pp. 52-53.

Nun Vassa comments on this: "In this section, Metropolitan Anastassy gives little argument for his position, referring only to the opinion of Holy Martyr Metropolitan Kirill... The very fact of Metropolitan Anastassy's unity of mind with Metropolitan Kirill in this ecclesiastical question is very interesting for us. For the foundation of his ecclesiastical position of St Kirill was not the letter of the law, but the real meaning of the Holy Canons constructive for the Church, opposing his understanding to the formalism of Metropolitan Sergius."

However, there are several major problems with Nun Vassa's interpretation here. First, Metropolitan Cyril never, even in his earlier, more "liberal" epistles, expressed the view that "there are no obstacles to prayerful communion and concelebration with clergymen of Metropolitan Sergius". On the contrary, in his earliest epistle, that of 1929, he wrote: "I acknowledge it as a fulfillment of our archpastoral duty for those Archpastors and all who consider the establishment of the so-called 'Temporary Patriarchal Synod' as wrong, to refrain from communion with Metropolitan Sergius and those Archpastors who are of one mind with him." Nor did he ever declare that while it was wrong to have communion with the Sergianist bishops, it was alright to have communion with their priests – which would have been canonical nonsense in any case. True, he refrained – at that time – from declaring the Sergianists to be graceless. However, he *did* say, in his epistle of 1934, that Christians who partook of the Sergianist sacraments knowing of Sergius' usurpation of power and the illegality of his Synod would receive them *to their condemnation* – a point for all those contemplating union with the MP today to consider very carefully...

Moreover, we now know (as Metropolitan Anastassy did not know) that by 1937 Metropolitan Cyril's position had hardened considerably: "With regard to your perplexities concerning Sergianism, I can say that the very same questions in almost the same form were addressed to me from Kazan ten years ago, and then I replied affirmatively to them, because I considered everything that Metropolitan Sergius had done as a mistake which he himself was conscious of and wished to correct. Moreover, among our ordinary flock there were many people who had not investigated what had happened, and it was impossible to demand from them a decisive and active condemnation of the events. Since then much water has flowed under the bridge. The expectations that Metropolitan Sergius would correct himself have not been justified, but *there has been enough time for the formerly ignorant members of the Church, enough incentive and enough opportunity to investigate what has happened; and very many have both investigated and understood that Metropolitan Sergius is departing from that Orthodox Church which the Holy Patriarch Tikhon entrusted to us to guard, and consequently there can be no part or lot with him for the Orthodox.* The recent events have finally made clear the *renovationist* [that is, *heretical*] nature of Sergianism..."

It follows that Metropolitan Anastassy's position was weaker than that of Metropolitan Cyril's position at the end of his life. In fact, it was much weaker also than that of Metropolitan Anthony in his encyclical of 1928, which proclaimed "the completely definitive declaration of our Synod of Bishops that the Moscow Synod has deprived itself of all authority, since it has entered into agreement with the atheists, and without offering any resistance it has tolerated the closing and destruction of the holy churches, and the other innumerable crimes of the Soviet government... That illegally formed organization which has entered into union with God's enemies, which Metropolitan Sergius calls an Orthodox Synod – but which the best Russian hierarchs, clergy and laymen have refused to recognize – ... must not be recognized by our Orthodox Churches, nor by our Synod of Bishops with its flock here abroad. Furthermore, the organization of the Moscow Synod must be recognized to be exactly the same sort of apostates from the Faith as the ancient *libellatici*, that is, Christians who although they refused to blaspheme openly against Christ and offer sacrifices to the idols, nevertheless still received from the priests of the idols false documents verifying that they were in complete accord with the adherents of pagan religion..."

Again, in 1933 Metropolitan Anthony wrote to Sergius: "Here we offer you the salutary oil of faith and loyalty in the Holy Church. Do not refuse it, but *reunite with it*." This clearly implies that Sergius was outside the Church...

It should be noted that Metropolitan Anthony's 1928 epistle was quoted in the Archpastoral Epistle of the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR under Metropolitan Philaret in 1969. So it could be said that in 1969 ROCOR returned to the "zealot" position she had adopted at the beginning of the Sergianist schism, and which was adopted by the leading hierarchs of the Catacomb Church, abandoning the supposedly "moderate" position of Metropolitan Anastassy in the intervening years. As for Metropolitan Philaret himself, his zealot position in relation to the MP was expressed many times, as is well-known, in the period that he was first hierarch.

It cannot be denied that some of Metropolitan Anastassy's statements on the MP were at times exceedingly liberal – so much so that they caused considerable distress to Catacomb Christians in ROCOR.<sup>195</sup> However, Nun

---

<sup>195</sup> Thus Professor I.M. Andreyev wrote: "Not only were we ready to die, but many did die, confident that somewhere *there*, outside the reach of the Soviet authorities, where there is freedom – *there* the Truth was shining in all its purity. *There* people were living by it and submitting to it. *There* people did not bow down to Antichrist. And what terror overwhelmed me when, fairly recently, I managed to come abroad and found out that some people here 'spiritually' recognise the Soviet Church. *Spiritually!* Many of us there fell, 'for fear of the Jews', or giving in to the temptation of outward cooperation with the authorities. I knew priests of the official Church who, at home, tore their hair out, who smashed their heads making prostrations, begging forgiveness for their apostasy, calling themselves Cain – but nonetheless they did not recognise the Red Church. But these others abroad – it is precisely *spiritually* that they submit to it. What good fortune that our priest-martyrs, in dying, did not

Vassa is subtly distorting the evidence; for for every “moderate” statement of Metropolitan Anastassy it is possible to find a much more “zealous” one. Thus in the same 1938 Council ROCOR under his presidency declared: “If the Church of God is destined to live in the wilderness through the Providence of the Almighty Creator, the judgement of history, and the legislation of the proletarian state, it follows clearly that she must forego all attempts to reach a legalization, for every attempt to arrive at a legalization during the epoch of apostasy inescapably turns the Church into the great Babylonian whore of blasphemous atheism.” Since the Moscow Patriarchate *was* legalized by the proletarian state, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that, in the official opinion of Metropolitan Anastassy in 1938, the MP became “the great Babylonian whore of blasphemous atheism”!

Again, in 1950 – that is, under the leadership of Metropolitan Anastassy – ROCOR consecrated holy chrism in Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville. This is traditionally the act of a completely autocephalous Church. ROCOR would not have been expected to carry out such an act if it regarded the MP as her “Mother Church”...

Again, in response to the MP’s description of Stalin as “the chosen one of the Lord, who leads our fatherland to prosperity and glory”, Metropolitan Anastassy wrote that this was the point “where the subservience of man borders already on blasphemy. Really – can one tolerate that a person stained with blood from head to foot, covered with crimes like leprosy and poisoned deeply with the poison of godlessness, should be named ‘the chosen of the Lord’, could be destined to lead our homeland ‘to prosperity and glory’? Does this not amount to casting slander and abuse on God the Most High Himself, Who, in such a case, would be responsible for all the evil that has been going on already for many years in our land ruled by the Bolsheviks headed by Stalin? The atom bomb, and all the other destructive means invented by modern technology, are indeed less dangerous than the *moral disintegration* which the highest representatives of the civil and church authorities have put into the Russian soul by their example. The breaking of the atom brings with it only physical devastation and destruction, whereas the *corruption of the mind, heart and will* entails the *spiritual death* of a whole nation, after which there is *no resurrection*.”<sup>196</sup>

In view of the fact that the MP continues to this day to glorify Stalin, it would be interesting to know Nun Vassa’s opinion of Metropolitan Anastassy’s words. Are they not also a manifestation of oikonomia? Do they not preclude any union with the MP at the present time?

---

find out about this betrayal!” (*Russia’s Catacomb Saints*, Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 1982, p. 49).

<sup>196</sup> I.M. Andreyev, *Is the Grace of God present in the Soviet Church?* Wildwood, Alberta: Monastery Press, 2002, pp. 32-33 (with some changes in the translation).

Nun Vassa quotes again from Metropolitan Anastassy's words at the 1953 Council: "Metropolitan Anthony was guided by this rule of St Basil the Great when he said that he was prepared to accept through the third rite both Catholics and Anglicans. He was of the view that as soon as organic ties to heresy are torn and Orthodoxy is accepted, grace is received, as if an empty vessel were filled with grace. We hold to the principle that we can accept those through the third rite whose thread of succession had not been torn. Even the Armenians, who confess a definite heresy, are accepted in their existing rank. Concerning the Anglicans, the question arose because they themselves are not certain that they have succession. If we accept those who depart from heresy, *how can we not accept our own* [emphasis mine—NV]? They say that Patriarch Alexy sinned more than his predecessor. Whether he sinned more or less, we cannot deny his ordination. Much is said of their apostasy. But we must be cautious. We can hardly make an outright accusation of apostasy. In no place do they affirm atheism. In their published sermons they attempt to hold to the Orthodox line. They took and continue to take very strict measures with regard to the obnovlentsy, and did not tear their ties with Patriarch Tikhon. The false policy belongs to the church authority and the responsibility for it falls on its leaders. Only heresy adopted by the whole Church tarnishes the whole Church. In this case, the people are not responsible for the behavior of the leaders, and the Church, as such, remains unblemished. No one has the audacity to say that the whole Church is without grace, but insofar as priests had contact with the devious hierarchy, acted against their conscience, repentance is necessary. There can be no discussion of 'chekists in cassocks.' They are worse than Simon the Sorcerer. In this regard, in every individual case, one must make a special determination, and, if there is suspicion that a chekist is asking to come to us, we must not accept him."

Metropolitan Anastassy's extremely liberal attitude towards the reception of Catholics, Anglicans and Armenians is perhaps excusable in that it reflects the extremely liberal attitude of the Russian Church as a whole just before the revolution. However, it disagreed not only with prior Russian practice, but also with the practice of the Greek Church, and with the holy canons themselves (for example: the canons decree that Armenians should be received by Chrismation). Fortunately, this illegitimate practice of "oikonomia" was officially rescinded by the ROCOR Synod under Metropolitan Philaret in September, 1971, when it was decreed that Catholics and Protestants should henceforth be received by baptism. And when the Copts were once allowed to conduct a service in Jordanville, Metropolitan Philaret ordered that the church be cleansed from the defilement of heresy by holy water!

As regards the Metropolitan Anastassy's assertion that the MP took "very strict measures with regard to the obnovlentsy", this, unfortunately, is not true. As is well-known, both the first "patriarchs" of the MP, Sergius and

Alexis, were former renovationists (*obnovlentsy*), and, far from repenting of their renovationism, they transformed the MP into an institution that was “renovationist in essence” (St. Cyril of Kazan’s words). Still more seriously, they received into the episcopate a whole series of renovationist protopriests with the minimum of formalities.

As Catacomb Church Bishop A. writes: “From September, 1943 to January, 1945, with a wave of a magic wand, all the renovationists suddenly repented before Metropolitan Sergius. The penitence was simplified, without the imposition of any demands on those who caused so much evil to the Holy Church. And in the shortest time the ‘penitent renovationists’ received a lofty dignity, places and ranks, in spite of the church canons and the decree about the reception of renovationists imposed [by Patriarch Tikhon] in 1925...

“As the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* informs us, the ‘episcopal’ consecrations before the ‘council’ of 1945 took place thus: the protopriest who had been recommended (undoubtedly by the civil authorities), and who was almost always from the ‘reunited’ renovationists or gregorians, was immediately tonsured into monasticism with a change in name and then, two or three days later, made a ‘hierarch of the Russian Church’.”<sup>197</sup>

This acceptance of the renovationists was dictated in the first place by the will of the Bolsheviks, who now saw the Sergianists as more useful to them than the renovationists. Thus on October 12, 1943 Karpov, Stalin’s “over-procurator”, wrote to Stalin and Molotov: “The renovationist movement earlier played a constructive role but in recent years has lost its significance and base of support. On this basis, and taking into account the patriotic stance of the Sergiite church, the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs has decided not to prevent the dissolution of the renovationist church and the transfer of the renovationist clergy and parishes to the patriarchal, Sergiite church.”<sup>198</sup> On October 16 Karpov sent secret instructions to the regions not to hinder the transfer of renovationists to the Sergianist church.<sup>199</sup>

Since Karpov wanted the renovationists to join the state church, the rules for their reception were relaxed. Thus in 1944 Metropolitan (and future “Patriarch”) Alexis (Simansky) severely upbraided Bishop Manuel (Lemeshevsky) for forcing “venerable” renovationist protopriests to “turn somersaults”, i.e. repent, before the people, in accordance with Patriarch Tikhon’s rules.<sup>200</sup>

---

<sup>197</sup> “Pis'mo 2-oe Katakombnogo Episkopa A. k F.M.” (The Second Letter of Catacomb Bishop A. to F.M.), *Russkij Pastyr'* (*Russian Pastor*), № 14, III-1992; *Russkoe Pravoslavie* (*Russian Orthodoxy*), 1996, № 2 (2), pp. 10, 11.

<sup>198</sup> Karpov, in Edward E. Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946*, Indiana University Press, 2002, pp. 194-195.

<sup>199</sup> Roslof, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>200</sup> See Metropolitan John (Snychev) of St. Petersburg, *Mitropolit Manuil (Lemeshevsky) (Metropolitan Manuel Lemeshevsky)*, St. Petersburg, 1993, p. 185.

As Edward Roslof writes: "The relaxation of rules by the patriarchate reflected the needs of both church and state. The patriarchal synod had full backing from the government and expected to emerge as the sole central authority for the Orthodox Church. So it could afford to show mercy. At the same time, the patriarchate faced a scarcity of clergy to staff reopened parishes and to run the dioceses. Sergii's bishops had problems finding priests for churches that had never closed. This shortage of clergy was compounded by the age and poor education of the candidates who were available. The patriarchate saw properly supervised red priests as part of the solution to the problem of filling vacant posts."<sup>201</sup>

However, the penetration of the patriarchate by these "red priests" meant that the new, post-war generation of clergy was quite different from the pre-war generation in that they had already proved their heretical, renovationist cast of mind, and now returned to the neo-renovationist MP like a dog to his vomit (II Peter 2.22), forming a heretical core that controlled the patriarchate while being in complete obedience to the atheists. The way in which the renovationist-sergianist hierarchs sharply turned course at a nod from the higher-ups was illustrated, in the coming years, by the MP's sharp change in attitude towards ecumenism, from strictly anti-ecumenist in 1948 to pro-ecumenist only ten years later.

In his assertion that "the false policy [of the MP] belongs to the church authority and the responsibility for it falls [only] on its leaders", Metropolitan Anastassy was unfortunately contradicting the teaching of the Orthodox Church, which considers that lay Christians are rational sheep who can and must separate from heretical leaders. Similarly, his assertion that "only heresy adopted by the whole Church tarnishes the whole Church" would not have been accepted by the hierarchs of the Ecumenical Councils. If the hierarchy of a Church adopts a heretical or antichristian policy, then it is the responsibility of all the lower ranks to rebuke their leaders, and if the rebukes fail, to separate from them because they are no longer true bishops (15<sup>th</sup> canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople).

The metropolitan then goes on to say: "There can be no discussion of 'chekists in cassocks.' They are worse than Simon the Sorcerer. In this regard, in every individual case, one must make a special determination, and, if there is suspicion that a chekist is asking to come to us, we must not accept him."

The clear implication of these words is that it is impossible to have communion with the present-day MP insofar as all its leading bishops have been proved to be KGB agents, and therefore "worse than Simon the Sorcerer"...

---

<sup>201</sup> Roslof, op. cit., p. 196.

### **3. Metropolitan Anastassy and the Greek Old Calendarists**

Having tried to justify Metropolitan Anastassy's lenience towards KGB agents and renovationists, Catholics, Anglicans and Armenians, Nun Vassa now tries to justify his *strictness* towards the Old Calendarist Greeks, in refusing to consecrate bishops for them: "At the Council of 1959, following the opinion of Metropolitan Anastassy, the Council decided to once again decline the request of the Old Calendarists. While considering this matter, the opinion was expressed that through the principle of oikonomia, they could help their Greek brethren. Metropolitan Anastassy rejected this oikonomia, finding that the ordination of a bishop in this instance would not be constructive but destructive for the Church, first of all because of the condemnations such an act would invoke among the other Local Churches and the Moscow Patriarchate."<sup>202</sup>

So vital brotherly help to the Orthodox and persecuted Greek Old Calendarists was refused on the grounds that it would irritate the heretics of World Orthodoxy...

However, other hierarchs of ROCOR – notably Leontius of Chile, Seraphim of Chicago, John of Western Europe and Averky of Jordanville – took a different view of what constituted oikonomia. The result was that the Greeks obtained their desired consecrations. Metropolitan Anastassy refused to accept the canonicity of these acts since they were done without his approval. From a strictly canonical point of view he was right. But from the point of view of oikonomia in the sense that Nun Vassa wishes to emphasise – that is, love acting for the salvation of souls – there can be little doubt that the other bishops were right.

An interesting point of view on this controversy was expressed by Archbishop Averky of Syracuse and Jordanville during the session of the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR on November 17/30, 1962: "I myself would not have decided to carry out the consecration of the Greek Old Calendarists. But at the same time, in the depths of my soul, I cannot help being delighted at the boldness with which Archbishop Leontius carried out this act to which his conscience called him.

"We emphasize that we do not recognize Patriarch Alexis, while all the patriarchs recognize him. We talk about communion with these patriarchs, and thereby we turn out paradoxically to be in communion with Moscow. A vicious circle is the result. In view of this irrational position, it is especially important for us to stand on a firm canonical foundation, preserving the essence, and not the letter, which can lead to the worship of Satan...

---

<sup>202</sup> Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kition (Cyprus) told the present writer that when he visited New York in the 1960s, Metropolitan Anastassy had refused his request on the grounds that it would upset Constantinople...



"He [Vladyka Leontius] carried out a courageous act of assistance to a fraternal Church, which is now the closest to us in spirit. The Greek Church is now attacked and persecuted. It was a great mistake that we in our time were too condescending to the introduction of the new style, for its aim was to introduce schism into the Orthodox Church. It was the work of the enemies of the Church of Christ. Its fruits are already evident. Even in America there are Greek clergy whose conscience torments them for accepting the new style. The keeping of various traditions in various spheres is bound up with following the old style. With the expulsion of the old style from the church the ascetic principle is also expelled. The Old Calendarists are the closest to us in spirit. The only 'but' in the action of Archbishop Leontius consists in the fact that he acted as it were in a non-fraternal manner, contrary to the decision of the council, although from good motives."<sup>203</sup>

At the same session Archbishop John Maximovich noted: "... The Old Calendarists have been knocking on our doors for six years. The Hierarchical Council cannot take the decision upon itself, since it recognizes that this is an internal matter of the Greeks. We must accept Archbishop Leontius' explanation [that the Greek Church is persecuted in the same way that the Catacomb Church is in Russia, so we must support it] as satisfactory, and with that bring our arguments to an end."

Vladyka John also recalled that in the past century there had been similar disturbances in the Antiochian Church. Then the Constantinopolitan Church had intervened. In the same way the Greek Church had helped the Church of Cyprus.

In 1969, the Synod of ROCOR under Metropolitan Philaret officially recognised the consecrations of the Greek Old Calendarist bishops, thereby reversing the policy of Metropolitan Anastassy...

In parenthesis, we should note that the ROCOR Synod under Metropolitan Anastassy also rejected the application of the Free Serbs to join them. And once again, Archbishops Averky of Jordanville and John (Maximovich) of San Francisco were among the dissidents...<sup>204</sup>

---

<sup>203</sup> Andrei Psarev, "Vospominania Arkhiepiskopa Leontia Chilijskago" (Reminiscences of Archbishop Leontius of Chile), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), № 5 (557), May, 1996, pp. 11-12.

<sup>204</sup> On September 14/27, 1967, Archbishop Averky wrote to Metropolitan Philaret: "With regard to the question of the Serbian Church, whose Patriarch German is a stooge of the communist Tito, as the Serbs themselves are convinced, calling him 'the red patriarch'. We have heard this from many clergy and laity who have fled from Serbia. How can we recognize, and have communion in prayer with, 'the red patriarch', who maintains the closest friendly relations with red Moscow? Cannot our Hierarchical Council make *erroneous* decisions? Do we in the Orthodox Church have a doctrine about the *infallibility of every Council of Bishops*?"

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we may agree with Nun Vassa that “ecclesiastical structure is closely bound to the understanding of oikonomia, or the oikonomia of the Holy Fathers”. But we cannot agree that Metropolitan Anastassy’s application of oikonomia provides a solution for the present ecclesiological crisis in the Russian Church. Even if Metropolitan Anastassy’s policy of extreme leniency to the MP and World Orthodoxy (and other heretics) were the right one for his time (approximately fifty years ago, before the “heresy of heresies”, ecumenism, had become a major problem), it agreed neither with the policy of his predecessor, Metropolitan Anthony, nor with that of the Catacomb Church as represented by Metropolitan Joseph and Metropolitan Cyril, nor with that of his successor, Metropolitan Philaret, and therefore does *not* provide a model for the projected union of ROCOR with the MP today unless we are to argue – which Nun Vassa has not even attempted to do – that Metropolitans Anthony, Joseph, Cyril and Philaret were all wrong in the comparatively stricter positions they adopted.

It should also be pointed out that, for all his “extreme leniency” as I have called it, Metropolitan Anastassy never seriously considered *union* with the MP, and in his last will and testament *forbade* any communion, even everyday, with its servants. Moreover, he was absolutely opposed to accepting any KGB agent in a cassock, whom he called “worse than Simon the Sorcerer”. In that respect, at any rate, we can well take him as our model and guide...

November 11/24, 2005.  
*St. Theodore the Studite.*

(First Published in *Vernost'*, N 30)

## **17. ROCOR AUTONOMY - A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE?**

Recently, the idea of eucharistic communion between ROCOR and the MP, but without administrative submission of the former to the latter, has been raised in ROCOR circles. As Dimitri Gontscharow writes: "In his recent letter to the dioceses of Australia and New Zealand, Met. Lavr... assures us that the talk is not of a 'merger', a 'coming together' or even 'union' with [the] MP. That once all the issues dividing us are resolved, we will be able to have Eucharistic communion from one chalice, but retain separate church administrations. That ROCOR will continue to maintain autonomy and decide all its internal business."<sup>205</sup>

This idea was first raised, to my knowledge, by Archbishop Mark of Berlin (*Vestnik Germanskoj Eparkhii*, 1997, N 4) shortly after he had assisted in the seizure by the MP and MGB agent Yasser Arafat of ROCOR's monastery in Hebron in July, 1997. This coincidence reveals what ROCOR "autonomy" will actually mean in practice: complete control of ROCOR by the MP.

However, let us look more closely at the idea of ROCOR autonomy, leaving aside for the moment the question of how and whether eucharistic communion could ever be justified. Is the proposed autonomy canonical? Is there any way in which, if certain conditions were met in reality and not simply on paper, it could guarantee true spiritual life for ROCOR?

The autonomy of ROCOR within the MP could be considered canonical only if the MP bishops who now occupy the same territories as the ROCOR bishops were voluntarily to resign their sees and go back to Russia, or accept to become vicar-bishops subject to their ROCOR counterparts. For it is a fundamental principle of canon law that two bishops of the same Local Church – or two bishops of different Local Churches who recognise each other and are in communion with each other – cannot occupy one and the same see.

The question is, then: has either ROCOR or the MP raised the possibility of the MP bishops in, say, Berlin or London or New York, resigning their sees in favour of their ROCOR counterparts? The answer to this question is a clear: no. In fact, the idea of MP bishops resigning their sees, has never, to my knowledge, been mentioned once in public by the MP.

Nor is that surprising. For the MP is negotiating from a position of overwhelming strength, and has no desire or need to disenfranchise its own favoured sons in favour of foreign upstarts whom only a short time ago it was calling "schismatics". Even when it granted the Orthodox Church of America autocephaly – and "autocephaly" implies a much larger degree of

---

<sup>205</sup> Gontscharow, "On Met. Lavr's Letter to the Dioceses of Australia and New Zealand".

independence than “autonomy” – it did not merge its own sees and parishes on the American continent into the OCA.

This brings us to the related problem of relations with the OCA. After the union with the MP, who will be the canonical bishop of San Francisco – Bishop Kyrill of ROCOR, or Bishop Tikhon of the OCA? One thing is certain: they cannot *both* be, according to the holy canons which all bishops and priests solemnly swear to uphold and observe.

More fundamentally, as Gontscharow points out, “if Eucharistic communion occurs between ROCOR and the MP, it is a violation of the canons for ROCOR to exist as an autonomous church on the same territory as the OCA. We would have to recognize OCA as the legitimate, canonical church of America and drop all our pretenses at sovereignty.” To do otherwise would be schismatic, for according to the MP, the OCA is the one canonical Local Orthodox Church of America. The fact that the MP itself retains parishes on American soil in violation of the OCA’s autocephaly does not alter this fact, but only shows that the MP itself is schismatic!

Will the MP allow Metropolitan Lavr to be the first-hierarchy of the whole of ROCOR throughout the world? Gontscharow thinks not. “The MP may allow Met. Lavr to remain in charge of North America, but if they need to, they can reduce that to the United States and assign someone else to Canada. The documents of the joint commissions hint at this arrangement, when they say all our bishops will be members of the MP synod in Moscow. Their synod will simply increase with new bishops and land areas.”

Moreover, there are several parts of the world in which the MP has bishops while ROCOR has only priests and parishes. Consider my native England, for example. There are two MP bishops resident in England, but no ROCOR bishops. Of course, Archbishop Mark bears the title of Germany and Great Britain. But can even the most naïve person believe that he would become the sole Russian Orthodox bishop in both Germany and Great Britain? No: the best he can hope for is to become Bishop of Germany alone – and that will be very difficult (unless he can use the KGB connections he is suspected of having acquired in 1983).

So ROCOR flock in England, if it does not flee to another jurisdiction, is almost certainly destined to be swallowed up in the MP diocese of Sourozh – perhaps the most liberal and ecumenist in the whole of that ecumenist organisation! If ROCOR leadership cared for their flock in England, they should consecrate a bishop for England now, and then they would at least have a further piece to bargain with in the final end-game. However, the only possible candidate for the episcopacy in England, Archimandrite Alexis (Pobjoy), has remained an archimandrite now for nearly 30 years; so for

reasons best known to themselves the ROCOR bishops have evidently passed him over...

Another point to be considered is the fact that autonomous Churches are usually created to “accommodate”, as it were, a foreign nationality, or the flock of the Local Church in a single foreign State. ROCOR is neither of these. It is not confined to a single State, such as the Ukraine, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia or Poland, but is spread over several continents. And, unlike the autonomous Churches of Ukraine, Moldova, Estonia, Latvia or Poland, it does not consist, in the main, of believers of a different nationality. On the contrary, the whole “pathos” of the movement for the union between ROCOR and the MP has been patriotic feeling: we are all Russians together, so we have to be united in a single church organisation, the “Mother Church” of the MP!

Of course, ROCOR has existed since the early 1920s as an autonomous Church on the basis of Patriarch Tikhon’s ukaz of November 7/20, 1920, which envisaged the existence of autonomous groups of Russian bishops for as long as a central church administration did not exist or could not be contacted. But *that* kind of autonomy will cease to exist immediately ROCOR enters into eucharistic communion with the MP and recognises the MP Patriarch as its canonical head. ROCOR cannot have it both ways: it cannot have the kind of complete control of its own affairs (more like autocephaly than autonomy) that it had as long as it considered Patriarch Tikhon’s ukaz to be in force and the MP Patriarch to be uncanonical, while at the same time being in eucharistic communion with the “Mother Church” and recognising the MP Patriarch to be its canonical head.

Gontscharow goes on to point out that “the documents produced by the joint commissions... do indeed described this self-styled ‘autonomy’ that ROCOR will enjoy, but they also include very specific language that is important to remember. The documents state that all matters outside ROCOR’s purview will be decided by the MP’s synod in Moscow. Clerics usually do not have much experience with contracts, but the MP delegation seems to, for they did not accidentally include that clause in the statements. They know it can provide Moscow with the upper hand in the future, as when any large firm absorbs a smaller company. That the clause can be used for a large variety of circumstances, where it might be useful to Moscow to declare a matter outside of the competencies of ROCOR and impose its will on the church.”

Let us speculate what matters may be considered by the MP to be “outside ROCOR’s purview”: ownership of church property, choice of liturgical language and liturgical practice in general, including liturgical calendar, sacramental practice (e.g. immersion or sprinkling at baptism), membership of the WCC, communion with the Catholics, Monophysites and others, confirmation of the election of a new chief-hierarchy, perhaps all important

church appointments, support both open and covert for the KGB-FSB, *loyalty to the Russian government at all times, including time of war.*

I have emphasised the phrase *loyalty to the Russian government at all times, including time of war* to show that those living outside Russia should not expect to be free of political demands from the MP inside Russia. Of course, it was Metropolitan Sergius' demand that the ROCOR bishops swear allegiance to the Soviet Union which constituted, even more than his notorious declaration, the immediate cause of the rupture between ROCOR and the MP. And there is no reason why the same conflict should not arise again.

For even as I write the neo-Soviet regime of Putin has begun to flex its political muscles by increasing the price of gas exported to the Ukraine fourfold, which is likely to have an enormous knock-on effect on energy prices throughout the world. If this conflict escalates into another cold, or even hot war, then ROCOR will have to choose its loyalties: to the Western States in which it lives, or to neo-Soviet Russia, including the neo-Soviet MP. Only this time the decision to break with Russia and the MP will be much more difficult than in 1927: first, because ROCOR will just have joined the MP, and secondly, because it is already much more thoroughly infiltrated and controlled by Putin's men.

Then, perhaps, we shall see the fulfilment of the prophecy of Elder Ignaty of Harbin: "What began in Russia [in 1927] will end in America [in 2006]..."

*December 21 / January 3, 2005/2006.  
St. Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow.*

(First Published in *Vernost'*, N 31)

## **18. A PROPOSAL TO THE 2006 SOBOR OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH ABROAD**

Dear Delegates to the Sobor, and all those await its outcome in the fear of God and with sincere hopes for the true unity of the Russian Church!

“Let us stand well, let us stand with fear,” chants the deacon at the beginning of the sacred Anaphora. You, too, are called to stand well and stand with fear at the forthcoming Sobor of the Russian Church Abroad. And we who watch from the sidelines, we too stand and pray; for the Church of Christ is one Body, and we cannot and must not remain indifferent to what is happening in any part of that Body.

We wish to make a constructive proposal to you, a proposal that may, we believe, help to bring a measure of unity to the faithful remnant of the Russian Church Abroad rather than the further disintegration that, as many fear, will be the result of the forthcoming Sobor. For from the accounts we have received, its leaders are proposing to bring the Russian Church Abroad into union with Patriarch Alexis of Moscow, the Eastern Pope, who, like the Western Pope, lies under many curses and anathemas. But we fervently hope that this council will not seal a false unia in the manner of the false unias of Florence in 1439 or Brest in 1596.

The basis of our hope is the fact that a holy remnant of dissenters opposed to union with Moscow appears to be gathering strength. Two or three bishops are rumoured to be against the false unia. Some districts – Russia, South America – appear to be solidly against it; and significant numbers in other districts – Eastern America, Australia – are also against. And dissenters have made their voices heard even in Jerusalem, in Western Europe and in Western America... The question is: what will this holy remnant do if and when the unia is signed? Exchange recriminations with the uniates, and then scatter off into various jurisdictions of the True Orthodox Church? Or form yet another jurisdiction of the Russian Church having no communion with the others?

We propose another alternative. We are convinced that the gathering of such a large number of Russian Christians in one place presents the opportunity of doing something more bold, more constructive and more pleasing to God – the opportunity to call on *all* past and present members of the Russian Church Abroad, to whichever jurisdiction they may belong, who are opposed to the unia with Moscow to reunite in One Church on the basis of Holy Orthodoxy.

The rest of this letter is a proposal addressed to you and all lovers of the Russian Church Abroad on how to grasp this opportunity.

\*

## *A Programme for an Anti-Uniate Sobor*

**1. Repentance.** The Prophet-King David says: “Turn away from evil, and do good” (Psalm 33.14). It is impossible to do a truly good work until one has thoroughly cleansed oneself from evil. To that end, refusal to join the Sovietised Moscow Patriarchate is a necessary step, but only a first step. We – and here we include ourselves, the signatories of this Proposal, as well as the delegates to the Sobor, and all those who have been members of, and taken part in the destinies of the Russian Church Abroad – must *repent* that by our sins, individual and collective, we have allowed the evil one to creep into our Church to such an extent that now, after many completed schisms, it stands on the threshold of yet another schism and almost complete self-destruction. St. John Maximovich and Archbishop Averky of Jordanville used to say that every Russian Christian was responsible to a greater or lesser extent for the betrayal of the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas that started the whole catastrophic train of events that has brought us to this pass. All the more should we, who have been closely involved in the destinies of the Russian Church Abroad for the last generation and more, repent that we have allowed it to fall so far.

But repentance needs to be specific and unsparing if it is to be effective and pleasing in God’s eyes. So we would limit our proposal at this stage to the event that we think we can all agree on as having been the decisive and disastrous turning-point in the recent history of ROCOR: the false council of 2000. This council, we believe, must be formally and in a conciliar manner declared to be false, its decisions must be officially repealed, and sincere repentance must be offered not only that it took place, but that we all, whether or not we actually took part in it, by our criminal actions and/or inaction made it possible for it to take place.

The Prophet Isaiah said: “How is the faithful city become a harlot!” But the Lord did not abandon the harlot: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall the good of the land” (1.21, 18). Let us hope that by our sincere repentance before the Lord our sins can be washed white as snow, and we can again eat of the good of the land, that land of which the Prophet-King says: “Thy good Spirit shall lead me in the land of uprightness” (Psalm 50.12).

**2. A Confession of Faith.** Having laid a good foundation in repentance, we can go forward to a confession of faith. In our opinion, this should not be too ambitious; that is, it should not attempt to resolve all the questions that divide Russian Christians, but only those that relate to the historic confession of the Russian Church Abroad in relation to Sergianism and Ecumenism, to the Sovietised Moscow Patriarchate and so-called “World Orthodoxy” – that is,



those Local Churches who take part in the ecumenical movement and in the World Council of Churches.

In our opinion, this end is best attained, following the example of the Ecumenical Councils and other God-inspired Councils, in two ways: (a) by quoting and reaffirming a selected number of documents expressing the faith of the Russian Church Abroad, and (b) by anathematising certain specific teachings and individuals. Some may object to anathematisations, as being too aggressive and confrontational. However, we believe that the practice of the great Church Councils of antiquity and also of more recent times (for example, the Russian Church Council of 1918, which anathematised the Bolsheviks, and Patriarch Tikhon's 1923 anathematisation of the renovationists, the anathematisation of the sergianists by the Catacomb Councils, as well as the anathematisation of the ecumenists by the 1983 Council of ROCOR) should be followed in order to avoid ambiguities and attempts to reinterpret or distort the Sobor's confession of faith. Moreover, we believe – again, in accordance with the practice of the Ecumenical Councils – that specific individuals, the leaders of the heresies of Sergianism and Ecumenism, should be anathematised by name. Then there will be no doubt about where the Sobor stands in relation to these individuals.

With regard to (a), we believe that only two documents need to be singled out for specific commendation and reaffirmation:

(1) Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky's never-repealed and therefore still authoritative encyclical of July 28 / August 10, 1928 expressing "the completely definitive declaration of our Synod of Bishops that the Moscow Synod has deprived itself of all authority, since it has entered into agreement with the atheists", calling it an illegally formed organization of apostates from the faith like the ancient libellatici, that is, Christians who although they refused to blaspheme openly against Christ and offer sacrifices to the idols, nevertheless still received from the priests of the idols false documents verifying that they were in complete accord with the adherents of pagan religion..."

(2) The ROCOR Synod's never-repealed and therefore still authoritative anathema against ecumenism of July 28 / August 10, 1983.

With regard to (b), in confirmation of previous anathematisations by the True Orthodox Church of Russia, the following false patriarchs should be anathematised: Sergius, Alexis I, Pimen and Alexis II of Moscow, and all the contemporary patriarchs of World Orthodoxy who take part in the World Council of Churches.

**3. Other True Orthodox Jurisdictions.** In the last ten years, the single organism of the Russian Church Abroad has divided into four major groups,

each having its own episcopate: ROCOR (L) under Metropolitan Laurus, ROCOR (V) under Metropolitan Vitaly, ROAC under Metropolitan Valentine ("Suzdal") and RTOC under Metropolitan Tikhon (the "Lazarites"). Each of these groups insists, with greater or lesser plausibility, that it is "the best", if not "the only" True Russian Church, while the others are, to a greater or lesser degree, "false", "schismatical" or at any rate "uncanonical". The result: canonical chaos, the loss of souls, and the disintegration of the common front against the one undoubtedly false jurisdiction – the Moscow Patriarchate.

At San Francisco yet another, fifth jurisdiction may well arise...

But it does not have to happen that way. Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) of Novgorod has called for the formation of a common front among the True Orthodox Russians against the Moscow Patriarchate. We wish to join our voices to this call, and to suggest a concrete way in which a beginning can be made to the process of gathering together the scattered fragments of the Russian Church Abroad. We suggest that the anti-uniates meeting in San Francisco, instead of forming a fifth jurisdiction, appeal to representatives of the other four to join them in their Sobor. These representatives will not be asked to concelebrate with the anti-uniates, nor with each other. They will not be required to drop their objections to this or that supposedly heretical, uncanonical or immoral person. The invitation will be to talk, no more. How things will develop from there we dare not speculate. But we can hope...

A word should be said about other non-Russian jurisdictions in True Orthodoxy. Several of these have been, at one time or another, in communion with ROCOR; some have even received their hierarchical orders from her. To exclude them completely from the picture would therefore be uncanonical and contrary to the commandments of Christ, insofar as "in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew". And there can be no doubt that the final triumph of truth over heresy cannot be a purely Russian thing, even in a single country. In every liturgy the Church prays for her members of all nationalities throughout the world, and the triumph of the Church in any part of the world is the triumph of the whole Church throughout the world.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the union of True Orthodox Russians with True Orthodox Greeks or Romanians or Serbs or Bulgarians will be much easier to achieve once the Russians have obtained a certain degree of unity among themselves. Apart from any other consideration, the non-Russians have great difficulty in knowing which faction of the Russians to attempt union with as long as they are all fighting each other. So we suggest that unity with the non-Russian jurisdictions should be set aside for the moment – but only for the moment...

**4. The Canonisation of Metropolitan Philaret.** If there is one thing that, we believe, all four of the existing jurisdictions, together with the anti-uniates

of San Francisco, can agree on and rejoice in, it is the holiness of Metropolitan Philaret of New York. This is witnessed to by the incorruption of his relics, several miracles and the purity of his confession against Sergianism and Ecumenism. There may be other candidates for canonisation; but Metropolitan Philaret is likely to be the least controversial and the most directly relevant to the nature of the struggle ahead of us.

Finally, we should point out that this proposal has been formulated and signed in the first place by laymen only, not out of any anti-clerical bias, but out of a realisation that it is often difficult for clergy, for reasons of jurisdictional loyalty and obedience to hierarchs, to sign an appeal or proposal that transcends jurisdictional boundaries. Nevertheless, we hope and pray that the clergy will read our proposal and ponder its contents. For we are acutely aware that while the laity may propose, it is the clergy who have the power to bring or not bring our proposals to fruition – all under the Providence of God, Who orders all things for our good. Therefore it is in all humility and not as some kind of rebels or innovators that we have written the above. For we believe firmly the word of the apostle: “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13.7-8).

*London.*  
*December 25, 2005 (O.S.).*  
*The Nativity of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Prince Dmitri Golitsyn  
Vladimir Moss  
Igor Sobolev

(organizational committee)

plus an indefinite number of signatures.

(First Published in *Vernost'*, N 30)

## **19. "THE SACRED LIE"**

Fr. Alexander Lebedev writes: "Vladimir Kozyreff (and others) have been arguing a position that the Orthodox Church cannot have any compromise with untruth (he calls this 'sergianism'); that a Church that fails to keep purity of faith loses Apostolic Succession and grace; that heresy cannot coexist with true teaching in the Church.

"In reality, the history of the Church proves the situation to be otherwise..."<sup>206</sup>

I have been polemicising with open and covert supporters of the MP for over thirty years, but I don't think I have ever come across such a shameful statement, a statement that so manifestly contradicts the most fundamental principles of Orthodoxy.

"Orthodoxy", as everyone on this list must know, means "right belief" or "right glorification". It clearly entails freedom from heresy and all untruth. We need only read the Order for the Triumph of Orthodoxy to understand that Orthodoxy and heresy cannot coexist, that the Orthodox Church anathematises all heresies, that all compromise with heresy is sin. Of course, individual members of the Orthodox Church sin and say untruths. Some even stray into heresy, wittingly or unwittingly. But the Orthodox Church can never and has never been reconciled with untruth, wherever it may come from. She always tries to convert her children who are straying into heresy to the path of truth, of Orthodoxy. She does not immediately expel them from her midst as long as there is hope of their conversion. But if they remain stubbornly attached to their heresy, she has to expel them. And at no time does she call the lie truth, or heresy Orthodoxy.

Fr. Alexander thinks otherwise. So what are we to think about Fr. Alexander? We can think nothing else than that he is no longer Orthodox in his mind-set, even if, perhaps, he remains, for the time being, part of the Orthodox Church.

And what are we to think of the position of someone who has to justify the presence of lies and heresy in the Orthodox Church? Only that it must be exceedingly weak...

"But you haven't considered his arguments," someone will say. I shall – in a moment. But it is worth pondering this first: that no Orthodox Father or Saint could ever agree with what he has written.

---

<sup>206</sup> Lebedev, "[orthodox-synod]Wheat and Tares – a Much More Fundamental Question", [orthodox-synod@yahoogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-synod@yahoogroups.com); [orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com), January 4, 2006.

Now let us look at his first argument: “There were many renowned Saints of the Church who were ordained by heretics. St. Tarasios of Constantinople stated that fully half of the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council were ordained by heretics.”

I think he means the Seventh Ecumenical Council, but never mind. If these Fathers, whether of the Sixth or Seventh Ecumenical Council, were originally ordained in heresy, they became Orthodox on their rejection of their heresy and reception into the Church. What is surprising or controversial about that?

Perhaps Fr. Alexander is inferring (although he does not make this clear) that the Fathers of the Ecumenical Council did not re-ordain those Fathers who had been ordained in heresy, and therefore accepted both their ordination and their heresy. I do not know exactly how these Fathers were received, whether “in their existing rank” or by re-ordination. But it does not really matter. For, as is well-known, although, according to the practice of “*oikonomia*”, in certain circumstances the Church can receive certain clergy “in their existing rank”, this in no way entails a recognition that the ordination performed in heresy was valid or grace-filled.

Moreover, we have clear historical evidence that St. Tarasios and the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council did *not* accept the penitent iconoclast bishops as already bishops and already inside the Church. Thus Archimandrite Nectarius (Yashunsky) writes: “As far as the Seventh Council is concerned, not only did it not consider the iconoclasts to be a part of the Church, but they themselves did not pretend to be such.” In support of this statement, Fr. Nectarius quotes from the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. “These are the words of the uniting iconoclasts. Thus Basil, bishop of Ancyra, said: ‘As far as I was able, I investigated the question of the icons and converted to the Holy Catholic Church with complete conviction.’ Theodore, bishop of Myra, said: ‘... I beseech God and your holiness to unite me, the sinful one, to the Holy Catholic Church.’” (pp. 41, 43 in the edition of the Kazan Theological Academy). And here are the witnesses of the holy Fathers of the Council: “His Holiness Patriarch Tarasius said: ‘What is now to be our relationship to this heresy that has again arisen in our time?’ John, the most beloved of God, *locum tenens* of the apostolic throne in the east, said: ‘Heresy divides every man from the Church.’ The Holy Council said: ‘That is evident.’ The Holy Council said: ‘Let the bishops who are standing before us read their renunciations, insofar as they are now converting to the Catholic Church.’”<sup>207</sup>

“*Heresy divides every man from the Church*”. Do you hear that, Fr. Alexander? That is what the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council said was “evident” – that is, clearly and obviously true.

---

<sup>207</sup> Yashunsky, *Ecclesiological Antitheses* (MS, in Russian), p. 48.

Now let us turn to the second argument: "A number of Church Fathers wrote and taught outright heresies, yet have not been condemned as being outside the Church. St. Gregory of Nyssa taught the false doctrine of universal salvation, for example. Several of the Church Fathers taught chiliasm..."

The Church does not accept all the opinions expressed by all the Church Fathers, but only "the consensus of the Fathers". Some Fathers have at certain times expressed opinions at variance with this consensus. Why did the Church not condemn them?

There could be many reasons.

One could be that the Father in question actually recanted of his heretical opinion. Thus Blessed Augustine wrote a whole book of recantations. Or it may be that the Father recanted in private, and this is not known to the world, but is known to the Church, which has the mind of Christ.

Again, it could be that the Father in question did not actually write what he is supposed to have written, or did not actually mean what people have taken him to mean. In the case of St. Gregory of Nyssa, I have seen a book (which, unfortunately, I have not read) that argues that the Holy Father has been misrepresented, that he did not preach, or did not mean to preach, universal salvation. Even if the world or many of her individual members do not know this, the Church, which is inspired by the Spirit of truth, knows it.

Again, it could be that the heresy in question has never been properly defined or discussed in council. Thus take the example of chiliasm. I have often heard that this heresy was condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council. And yet I have never seen this condemnation, and no theologian has been able to show it to me. Moreover, even Blessed Jerome, who, with Blessed Augustine, was the foremost enemy of the teaching, while mocking the chiliasts as "our half-Jews"<sup>208</sup>, in other places speaks of them with more respect, as holding views "which, although we may not hold, we cannot condemn, because many ecclesiastical men and martyrs have taught the same".<sup>209</sup> One thing is certain: none of the so-called chiliast Fathers - SS. Justin, Irenaeus and Methodius - believed in a literal 1000-year reign of Christ, nor that the Jewish law would be introduced during that period, nor that every sensual pleasure would be indulged in it. So whether they actually preached anything heretical is highly debatable.

Fr. Alexander's third argument is based on a false interpretation of the Lord's Parable of the Wheat and the Tares in Matthew 13.

---

<sup>208</sup> St. Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 60.1, 66.20.

<sup>209</sup> St. Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 19.10.

“So,” he says, after quoting the whole Parable, “the Church has tolerated some tares among its good wheat during the entire time of its existence. It is not Cyprianism that first invented the terms ‘ailing and well members’ of the Church. This was used by St. Tarasios to describe the situation of the Church at the time of the iconoclastic heresy – and also by St. Basil the Great to describe the sad state of the Church during his time. So – the final answer is that the Church can tolerate those within it who bear false witness in times of persecution. They do not stain the Church, and it does not lose grace because of this. The wheat and the tares will coexist within it until the time of harvest.”

With regard to Cyprianism, it should be pointed out that while the members of the Church differ greatly in sanctity and spiritual health, she never tolerates sin or untruth in the sense of allowing it to flourish unchecked. A person who commits a mortal sin is excommunicated. A person who utters heresy and refuses to retract it is also excommunicated and, in extreme cases, anathematised, just as Lev Tolstoy was anathematised by the Russian Church in 1901.

Where did you get the idea, Fr. Alexander, that the Church tolerates those within it who bear false witness in times of persecution? This is completely untrue. Those who bore false witness in, for example, the African persecution of the third century, were rejected by the Church as being libellatici, and were received by her into communion only after fifteen years of sincere repentance. And you must know that in his encyclical of July 28 / August 10, 1928 Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) expresses “the completely definitive declaration of our Synod of Bishops that the Moscow Synod has deprived itself of all authority, since it has entered into agreement with the atheists”, calling it an illegally formed organization of apostates from the faith like the ancient libellatici, that is, Christians who although they refused to blaspheme openly against Christ and offer sacrifices to the idols, nevertheless still received from the priests of the idols false documents verifying that they were in complete accord with the adherents of pagan religion...”

But let us examine the Parable you quote, and in particular a patristic interpretation of the Parable, by Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria: “The field is the world, or, each one’s soul. The sower is Christ. The good seed is good people, or, good thoughts. The tares are heresies, or, evil thoughts. The one who sows them is the devil. The men who are sleeping are those by their indolence give entry to heretics and evil thoughts. The servants are the angels, who are indignant that there are heresies or any wickednesses in the soul, and wish to seize and cut off from this life the heretics and those who think evil thoughts. But God does not allow the heretics to be destroyed by wars, lest the righteous suffer and be destroyed along with them...”<sup>210</sup>

---

<sup>210</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Exposition of the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, House Springs, MO: Chrysostom Press, p. 115.

It should be noted, first, that there is nothing said about the Church here. The actors – those who eventually gather up the tares – are the angels, not Church hierarchs. Moreover, the action that is being debated – whether and when the tares should be gathered up and destroyed – does not concern the Church's judgement on heretics by means of conciliar decisions and anathemas. It is *the physical extermination* of heretics. This is made clear by the words: "But God does not allow the heretics to be destroyed by wars..."

Now is Vladimir Kozyreff or anybody else advocating the physical extermination of the sergianist heretics? Of course not! God will decide when to send the angel of death to take from this life Alexis II and the other heretics. We Orthodox Christians, however, have a duty to express our rejection of heretics and their heresies, and to try to have them removed from the Church if they prove impenitent. In other words, the Church strives, not for the *physical extermination* of heretics, but their *spiritual detoxification or decommissioning*, just as one might attempt to decommission a dangerously malfunctioning nuclear reactor.

In typically sergianist fashion, Fr. Alexander has confused the Church and the world. The world lies in evil and heresy; this is its normal condition; and it will not change until its final destruction at the Second Coming of Christ. It has no means of cleansing itself because it does not have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of purity and truth. The Church, on the other hand, being the home of the Holy Spirit, is in the process of constant self-purification. Of course, this process is never complete, and the world, the flesh and the devil are constantly introducing impurities and untruths into it. But as long as the process of self-purification continues, through the action of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Mysteries, the Church remains the Church, "the ark of salvation" and "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3.15).

However, a local Church ceases to be a Church when the process of self-purification comes to an end. And that takes place when the Holy Spirit flees from it as a result of either (a) the enthronement of heresy in its official teaching, or (b) its falling away from the Body of Christ into schism. At that point it becomes part of the world – a very "religious" part of the world, perhaps, but still a part of the world, whose essence is worldliness and whose natural element is filth and lies. The idea that the pillar and ground of the Truth can accept untruth and heresy officially is absurd and a contradiction in terms. If the Church were to tolerate heresy in principle, as Fr. Alexander is suggesting, then it would immediately cease to be the Church and would become a part of the world. For it has accepted the basic principle of the world, which is acceptance of evil and untruth, as its norm, and in which, like the witches in Macbeth, men "lie like truth". But the truth is, as St. John the Apostle says, that "no lie is of the truth" (I John 2.21).



It's really very simple. So why is Fr. Alexander trying to make it so complicated? Because he wants to join the truth of the Church to a lie - the lie of the Moscow Patriarchate - in a monstrous and adulterous union...

Let us remind ourselves what that lie is: that it is possible for the leading hierarchs of the Church to lie "in order to save the Church" - by which they actually mean themselves. Metropolitan Sergius lied about Soviet power, saying that it was "God-established", and about the Church's relationship to that power, saying that their "joys and sorrows" were the same. He justified this "sacred lie" on the grounds that thereby he was saving the Church. So "the pillar and ground of the Truth" had to be saved by a lie, "the ark of salvation" - by immersion in the flood of the revolution!

Was the Church of Metropolitan Sergius saved by this lie? By no means! It was rather as the Lord said through the Prophet Isaiah: "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it" (28.18). For the overwhelming scourge of the 1930s swept through the sergianist church with a terrible vengeance. By 1939 only 4 hierarchs (Sergius among them, of course) had survived in freedom in the whole land of Russia, and many tens of thousands of priests had been killed.

But this physical destruction was as nothing compared to the spiritual devastation. For from a spiritual point of view, the sergianist church did not survive even in a greatly reduced form: it died a terrible and ignominious death. For it was no longer "the pillar and ground of the truth", but the upholder and champion of the greatest of all untruths: that Christ and Antichrist can live together in harmony, the former sharing the joys and sorrows of the latter...

If the sergianist church was no longer "the pillar and ground of the truth", what was it? There are only two possibilities. Either it became a non-religious society not directly concerned with truth, but rather with, for example, Russian culture or art of folklore - a kind of ethnographic museum. Or it became *the pillar and ground of the lie*. There is no other alternative, because, as St. Mark of Ephesus said, there is no mid-point between the truth and the lie.

Let us listen to the words of Hieromartyr Damascene, Bishop of Glukhov, who suffered a terrible but glorious death because he refused to accept Sergius' lie: "What will those who have come to the Church say? What will they feel when, even from there, from the height of the last refuge of righteousness rejected by the world, from the height of the ambon, there sound words of hypocrisy, of man-pleasing and slander? Will it not seem that falsehood is achieving its final victory over the world, and that there, in the place where the image of Incarnate Truth flashed for them with the

Unwaning Light, there now laughs in a disgusting grimace the mask of the father of lies?

"It is one or the other: either the Church is truly the immaculate and pure Bride of Christ, the Kingdom of truth, in which case the Truth is the air without which we cannot breathe, or, like the whole world which lies in evil, it lives in lies and by lies, in which case everything is a lie, every word is a lie, every prayer, every sacrament.

"It seems to us that Metropolitan Sergius and those with him are enslaved by a terrible fantasy, the fantasy that it is possible to build the Church on man-pleasing and untruth. But we affirm that a lie can give birth only to a lie, and that it cannot be the foundation of the Church. Before our eyes we have the shameful path of "the church of the evil-doers" - renovationism. And this shame of the gradual immersion in the engulfing mud of ever more terrible compromises and apostasy, this horror of complete degradation awaits the community of the Church if it goes along the path marked out for it.

"It seems to us that Metropolitan Sergius has wavered in his faith in the omnipotence of the All-conquering Truth, in the omnipotence of God. And this wavering has been transmitted in the form of a terrible jolt to the whole body of the Church, making it shudder. There will be more than one heart that on hearing the words of untruth within the walls of the church will shake in its faith and perhaps be wounded in its most secret sanctuary; it will tear itself away from the Church that has deceived it and will remain outside her walls. The silence of thousands will utter a terrible word to the very heart of the people, wounding their much-suffering soul, and the rumour will spread to all the ends of the earth that the Kingdom of Christ has become the kingdom of the beast.

"What a pitiful and unworthy existence. Truly it is better to die than to live in this way..."

You have heard the words of the hieromartyr, Fr. Alexander: it is better to die than to live on the foundation of the lie. So go away and tell this to those Muscovite hierarchs with whom you are negotiating for the souls of thousands of eternal souls for whom Christ died. And before you make your Faustian bargain with them, think of these words from the Truth Himself: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8.44).

*December 28 / January 10, 2005/2006.*

## **20. METROPOLITAN ANASTASY, THE NAZIS AND THE SOVIETS**

Apart from the dogmatic-canonical questions of ecumenism and sergianism, one of the subjects that continues to divide the Moscow Patriarchate from the Russian Church Abroad is their differing attitudes to the victory of the Soviets in the Second World War. For the MP, as was made obvious at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in Moscow last May, this was an unequivocally glorious victory, a victory of truth over falsehood, good over evil. In this, of course, it is following closely the lead given by Putin's neo-Soviet regime, for which Stalin and Stalinism are not dirty words, and which regards the fall of communism in 1991 as "a geopolitical tragedy" which it is doing everything possible to reverse. The attitude of ROCOR was different. Without in any way overlooking or condoning the terrible cruelties of the Nazi regime, it could not fail to regard the victory and consolidation of militant atheism over a vast territory from Berlin to Vladivostok with profound sorrow. Contrary to the slander of the Moscow Patriarch Alexis I, ROCOR never gave unequivocal support to the Nazis; but it did bless those Russian patriots who fought in the German armies in order to liberate their country from the all-annihilating scourge of Sovietism. In this article this thesis is developed on the basis of historical documents, and in particular the speeches of the leader of ROCOR, Metropolitan Anastasy.

### **ROCOR in Germany**

It is necessary first of all to discuss the question of ROCOR's relationship to Hitler before the war.

On February 25, 1938 Hitler signed a law "On the land-ownership of the Russian Orthodox Church in Germany", according to which "the State in the person of the minister of ecclesiastical affairs received the right to dispose of the Russian ecclesiastical property in the country and in the territories joined to it." On the basis of this law the German State handed over all the pre-revolutionary property of the Russian Church in Germany into the possession of ROCOR, besides the church in Dresden.<sup>211</sup> The German government did not hand over all the property to ROCOR immediately. As Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris writes in his memoirs (p. 648), for some time it still retained parishes in Berlin, in Eastern Prussia and in Dresden.<sup>212</sup> However, on May 5, 1939 the law was extended to Dresden and the Sudetenland.

---

<sup>211</sup> A.K. Nikitin, *Polozhenie russkoj pravoslavnoj obschiny v Germanii v period natsistskogo rezhima (1933-1945)* (The Position of the Russian Orthodox Community in Germany in the Nazi Period (1933-1945), annual theological conference PSTBI, Moscow, 1998; Monk Benjamin, *Letopis' Tserkovnykh Sobytij (1928-1938)* (Chronicle of Church Events (1939-1949)), part 3, <http://www.zlatoust.ws/letopis2.htm>, part 2, p.71.

<sup>212</sup> G.M. Soldatov, personal communication.

It may be asked why the German government was so favourably disposed to ROCOR. Part of the answer may lie in the fact that the authorities had a negative opinion of the Paris jurisdiction of Metropolitan Eulogius because of its links with the YMCA and other internationalist organizations, and were therefore more favourably disposed to ROCOR, which had broken links with the Eulogians. Also, some of the churches in their possession had been built with the participation of German royalty who had family links with the House of the Romanovs, and ROCOR was, of course, the Orthodox jurisdiction with the closest links with the Romanovs. Perhaps also they were counting in this way to elicit the sympathy of the Balkan Slavic peoples towards Germany.<sup>213</sup>

In 1938 Hitler also gave ROCOR a plot of land in Berlin to build a church, for which Metropolitan Anastasy thanked him. This formed the basis on which "Patriarch" Alexis of Moscow later accused him of having sympathy for fascism. The truth of the matter was explained by Metropolitan Anastasy himself in October, 1945 as follows: "Soon after his coming to power Hitler learned that the Russian Orthodox people in Berlin did not have a church of their own after the church built by them had been removed from the parish because they could not pay the debts they had incurred for it. This led immediately to order the release of considerable sums of money for the building of a new Orthodox church on a beautiful plot of land set aside for this in the German capital. We should note that Hitler took this step without any deliberate request on the part of the Russian Orthodox community and did not attach any conditions to his offering that might have been compensation for it. The Hierarchical Synod as well as the whole of Russia Abroad could not fail to value this magnanimous act, which came at a time when Orthodox churches and monasteries were being mercilessly closed, destroyed or used for completely unsuitable purposes (they were being turned into clubs, cinemas, atheist museums, food warehouses, etc.), and other holy things in Russia were being mocked or defiled. This fact was noted in the address [given by the metropolitan], but the Synod of course gave no 'blessing to destroy and conquer Russia'."<sup>214</sup>

In fact, the address sent to Hitler was not composed by Metropolitan Anastasy, but by the president of the Russian colony in Berlin, General V. Biskupsky, an adventurer and opportunist who had already been involved in several political escapades.<sup>215</sup> When it was shown to the metropolitan, he

---

<sup>213</sup> G.M. Soldatov, personal communication.

<sup>214</sup> *Poslanie k russkim pravoslavnyim liudiam po povodu 'Obraschenia patriarkha Aleksia k arkipastyrjam i kliru tak nazyvaemoj Karlovatskoj orientatsii'* (Epistle to the Russian Orthodox people on the 'Address of Patriarch Alexis to the archpastors and clergy of the so-called Karlovtsy orientation), in G.M. Soldatov, *Arkhiejskij Sobor Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej, Miunkhen (Germania) 1946 g.* (The Hierarchical Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad at Munich in 1946), Minneapolis, 2003, p. 13.

<sup>215</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*, p. 12, footnote 9.

found it too “flowery”. But it had already been sent to the ministry of internal affairs, and it was too late to compose a new, more moderate variant.<sup>216</sup>

After the German annexation of Czechia and Moravia in March, 1939, the Germans tried to place all the Orthodox in those territories under the jurisdiction of ROCOR’s Archbishop Seraphim (Lyade). On November 3, Seraphim concluded an agreement with the Eulogian Bishop Sergius of Prague whereby his parishes were transferred, from a purely juridical point of view, into the jurisdiction of Archbishop Seraphim, but retained their intra-ecclesiastical independence and submission to Metropolitan Eulogius.<sup>217</sup> A similar arrangement was made with the parishes of the Serbian Bishop Vladimir (Raich) in Transcarpathia and Slovakia.<sup>218</sup>

The influence of Archbishop (later Metropolitan) Seraphim in the German government was to prove useful again. On November 4, 1940 the Eulogian Archbishop Alexander (Nemolovsky) of Brussels was arrested after the liturgy and imprisoned as “enemy № 2” in Aachen. From there he was transferred to a prison in Berlin. It was Archbishop Seraphim who rescued Archbishop Alexander from prison and settled him at the Russian church in Tegel, where he remained until the end of the war.<sup>219</sup>

### *The German Invasion of Serbia*

It was not surprising, or reprehensible, that ROCOR and her first-hierarchy, Metropolitan Anastasy, should have cooperated with the Germans – but without supporting the Nazi ideology – so long as they did no harm to the Orthodox Church, and even benefited it. However, it was a different matter when they invaded an Orthodox country, Serbia. Archbishop Averky writes: “The unexpected German bombardment of Belgrade on April 6, 1941, which soon decided the fate of Yugoslavia, produced such a shattering impression that the capital was completely abandoned, both by the government organs and by the ordinary inhabitants, who fled in indescribable panic for many tens of kilometers. Amidst this complete devastation it was only in the life of the Russian church in Belgrade that no essential changes took place: the services prescribed by the Typicon continued as usual, while priests went with the Holy Gifts around the city, giving communion to the wounded and carrying out prayer services in the refuges. During the raid Metropolitan Anastasy remained at his hierarchical place in the altar, while the clergy took it in turns to serve prayer services in front of the wonder-working Kursk-Root icon of the Mother of God ‘of the Sign’. And this in spite of the fact that five

---

<sup>216</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>217</sup> M. Nazarov, *Missia russkoj emigratsii* (The Mission of the Russian Emigration), Moscow, 1994, vol. 1, p. 266; in Monk Benjamin, *Letopis' Tserkovnykh Sobytij (1938-1948)* (Chronicle of Church Events (1939-1949)), part 3, <http://www.zlatoust.ws/letopis3.htm>, part 3, p. 5.

<sup>218</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 1.

<sup>219</sup> M.V. Shkarovsky, in Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 14-15.

bombs fell in the immediate vicinity of our church, the neighbouring Serbian church of St. Mark burned down, and for a whole two days a gigantic fire from a warehouse full of logs that had been hit by a bomb burned just next to the wall of the church. On the second day, March 25 / April 7, on the very feast of the Annunciation, when there was a particularly violent bombardment, Vladyka Metropolitan was present at the Divine Liturgy which one of the priests celebrated in the basement of the Russian House for the many Russian people who had sheltered there. This liturgy, which was carried out in a situation recalling that of the ancient Catacomb Christians, was sealed for life in the memory of all those who received communion at it. And with the blessing of Vladyka Metropolitan up to 300 people received communion after a general confession (this was in view of the danger of death that clearly threatened everyone).

“Exactly a week later, on Lazarus Saturday, the Germans entered the completely destroyed and deserted city, and difficult years began for the Russian emigration in Yugoslavia. Together with the whole of his Belgrade flock, Vladyka Metropolitan nobly endured hunger and cold and all kinds of restrictions and deprivations, various unpleasantnesses from the German occupying authorities and hostile attacks from that part of the Serbian population which had submitted to the influence of communist propaganda.

“Soon after the occupation of Yugoslavia by the German armies, members of the Gestapo carried out a thorough search in the residence of Vladyka Metropolitan Anastasy, and then took away the clerical work of the Hierarchical Synod.<sup>220</sup> However, they were forced to admit that Vladyka, as a true Archpastor of the Church of Christ, was profoundly alien to all politics, and they left him in peace.”<sup>221</sup>

### **The German Invasion of Russia**

The Germans invaded Russia on June 22, the feast of all Saints of Russia. They were in general greeted with ecstatic joy. Thus Solzhenitsyn writes: “Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia gave the Germans a jubilant welcome. Belorussia, the Western Ukraine, and the first occupied Russian territories followed suit. But the mood of the people was demonstrated most graphically

---

<sup>220</sup> On the day the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, writes M.V. Shkarovsky, “a search was carried out in the residence of Metropolitan Anastasy [in Belgrade]... [and] searches in the chancellery of the Hierarchical Synod and in the flat of the director of the synodal chancellery G. Grabbe... During the search the clerical work of the Synod and many other documents were taken away to Germany for study. In 1945 they were acquired by the Soviet armies and are now in Moscow, in the State archive of the Russian federation...” (*Natsistskaia Germania i Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'* (Nazi Germany and the Orthodox Church), Moscow, 2002, p. 193; in Soldatov, *op. cit.*, p. 12). (V.M.)

<sup>221</sup> Averky, *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Mitropolita Anastasia* (A Life of his Beatitude Metropolitan Anastasy), in *Troitskij Pravoslavnij Russkij Kalendar' na 1998 g.* (Trinity Orthodox Russian Calendar for 1998), Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, pp. x-xi.

of all by the Red Army: before the eyes of the whole world it retreated along a 2,000-kilometre front, on foot, but every bit as fast as motorized units. Nothing could possibly be more convincing than the way these men, soldiers in their prime, voted with their feet. Numerical superiority was entirely with the Red Army, they had excellent artillery and a strong tank force, yet back they rolled, a rout without compare, unprecedented in the annals of Russian and world history. In the first few months some three million officers and men had fallen into enemy hands!

“That is what the popular mood was like – the mood of peoples some of whom had lived through twenty-four years of communism and others but a single year. For them the whole point of this latest war was to cast off the scourge of communism. Naturally enough, each people was primarily bent not on resolving any European problem but on its own national task – liberation from communism...”<sup>222</sup>

“In the years of the war,” writes Anatoly Krasikov, “with the agreement of the German occupying authorities, 7547 Orthodox churches were opened (as against 1270 opened in 1944-1947 with the permission of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church).”<sup>223</sup> Even in fully Sovietized regions such as Pskov and the Eastern Ukraine, 95% of the population, according to German reports, flooded into the newly-opened churches.

It was natural for ROCOR to welcome the resurrection of Orthodoxy in German-occupied Russia. It had nothing to do with any political sympathies for the Nazis. Thus “in September, 1941 Vladyka Metropolitan gave his blessing to the Russian patriots who hoped that hour of the liberation of the Russian people from the bloody oppression of Bolshevism to form a Russian Corps. However, the Germans did not allow this Corps to take part in military actions on the eastern front, but was left in Yugoslavia to defend it from local communist bands.”<sup>224</sup>

Again, in his paschal epistle for 1942 Metropolitan Anastasy wrote: “The day that it (the Russian people) has been waiting for has come, and it is now truly rising from the dead in those places where the courageous German sword has succeeded in severing its fetters... Both ancient Kiev, and much-suffering Smolensk and Pskov are radiantly celebrating their deliverance as if from the depths of hell. The liberated part of the Russian people everywhere has already begun to chant: ‘Christ is risen!’”<sup>225</sup>

---

<sup>222</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *The Mortal Danger*, London: The Bodley Head, 1980, pp. 39-40.

<sup>223</sup> Krasikov, “‘Tretij Rim’ i Bol’sheviki” (The Third Rome and the Bolsheviks), in L.M. Vorontsova, A.V. Pchelintsev and S.B. Filatov (eds.), *Religia i Prava Cheloveka (Religion and Human Rights)*, Moscow: “Nauka”, 1996, p. 203.

<sup>224</sup> Averky, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

<sup>225</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn’* (Church Life), 1942, N 4; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 41.

In June, the Synod of ROCOR made some suggestions to the German authorities on the organization of the Church in Russia. In June it wrote: "...In the spirit of the canons of the Orthodox Church there exists only one solution in the question of the organization of the Church's administration, and that is the convening of a Council of Russian hierarchs by the eldest among them and the appointment by this Council of a temporary head of the Church and of the rest of the Church administration." The final organization of the governing organs and the election of a Patriarch could take place, in the opinion of the Synod, only when 'hierarchs will be appointed to all the vacant sees and normal relations are established in the country'.<sup>226</sup>

However, ROCOR's attitude to the Germans remained cautious because the attitude of the Germans to the Orthodox Faith was ambiguous. Hitler was "utterly irreligious"<sup>227</sup>, but feigned religious tolerance for political reasons. Thus "the heaviest blow that ever struck humanity," he said, "was the coming of Christianity. Bolshevism is Christianity's illegitimate child. Both are inventions of the Jew. The deliberate lie in religion was introduced into the world by Christianity. Bolshevism practises a lie of the same nature, when it claims to bring liberty to men, only to enslave them."<sup>228</sup> But at the same time he recognized that Christianity "can't be broken so simply. It must rot and die off like a gangrened limb." And on April 11, 1942, he said: "We must avoid having one solitary church to satisfy the religious needs of large districts, and each village must be made into an independent sect, worshipping God in its own fashion. If some villages as a result wish to practise black magic, after the fashion of Negroes or Indians, we should do nothing to hinder them. In short, our policy in the wide Russian spaces should be to encourage any and every form of dissension and schism."<sup>229</sup>

The Germans wanted to prepare new priestly cadres who would conform to their views on the Jews. On October 31, 1941 a directive went out from the Main Administration of Imperial Security for the Reich: "The resolution of the ecclesiastical question in the occupied eastern provinces is an exceptionally important... task, which with a little skill can be magnificently solved in favour of a religion that is free from Jewish influence. However, this influence is predicated on the closing of churches in the eastern provinces that are infected with Jewish dogmas..."<sup>230</sup>

One thing the Germans did *not* want was the resurrection of the Great Russian people through the Church. On May 16, 1942 A. Rosenberg, the head

---

<sup>226</sup> Synodal Archive in New York, d. 15/41, 1.27-30; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 44.

<sup>227</sup> Richard Overy, *Russia's War*, London: Penguin Books, 1999, p. 162.

<sup>228</sup> Cited in Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin*, London: Harper Collins, 1991, p. 801.

<sup>229</sup> Cited by W. Alexeyev and T. Stavrou, *The Great Revival*, Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1979, pp. 60-61.

<sup>230</sup> I. Altman, *Kholokost i evrejskoe soprotivlenie na okkupirovannoj territorii SSSR* (The Holocaust and Jewish resistance in the occupied territories of the USSR); Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 34.



of the ministry of the East, said in Riga to a meeting of General and Security Commissars: "The Russian Orthodox Church was a political instrument of the power of tsarism, and now our political task consists in creating other ecclesiastical forms where the Russian Church used to exist. In any case we will hinder the Great Russian Orthodox Church from lording it over all the nationalities... We should think more about introducing the Latin script instead of the Russian. Therefore it is also appropriate that some churches should remain as far as possible restricted to the province of one General Commissar... It is also appropriate for Estonia and Latvia that they should have their own national churches..."<sup>231</sup>

Again, on August 8, 1942 the head of the German General Commissariat wrote to Archbishop Philotheus, temporary head of the Belorussian Autonomous Church, forbidding the baptism of Jews, the opening of work-houses attached to monasteries, the opening of theological seminaries and academies without the permission of the German authorities and the teaching of the Law of God in school. He also removed the juridical status of Church marriages. It was becoming clear that the authorities were not intending to give any rights to the Orthodox Church in Belorussia.<sup>232</sup>

On August 12, Archbishop Seraphim (Lyade) wrote from Vienna to Metropolitan Anastasy: "With regard to the question of sending priests to Russia: unfortunately, according to all available data, the higher government authorities are so far not well-disposed towards a positive solution of this question. I made several petitions, but without success. In all probability, the authorities suspect that the clergy from abroad are bearers of a political ideology that is unacceptable for the German authorities at the present time. I did not even succeed in getting permission to transfer several priests to Germany from abroad (for example, Fr. Rodzianko), and according to the information I have received permission was not given because these priests supposedly worked together with émigré political organizations."<sup>233</sup>

On October 21, 1943, with the permission of the Germans (the first time they had given such permission), Metropolitan Anastasy came to Vienna from Belgrade and convened a Conference of eight bishops of ROCOR which condemned the election of the Moscow patriarch as unlawful and invalid.<sup>234</sup> When the hierarchs assembled in the hall, two representatives of the Nazi government wanted to be present, but the hierarchs refused, saying they wanted to discuss Church matters. The representatives withdrew... Although no protocols of the Council were taken, we know from Bishop Gregory (Boriskevich), formerly of Gomel, who later became a bishop in Canada and

---

<sup>231</sup> M.V. Shkarovsky, *Pravoslavie i Rossia* (Orthodoxy and Russia); Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, pp. 41-42.

<sup>232</sup> Archbishop Athanasius (Martos); Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 45.

<sup>233</sup> Synodal Archive in New York, d. 15/41, 1.27-30; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, pp. 45-46.

<sup>234</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, pp. 63-64.

then the USA (+ 1957), that the main subject for discussion at the Council was the sending of priests to the territories liberated from communism and the establishment of links with the priests already there.<sup>235</sup>

“The conference composed and sent to the German authorities a memorandum which contained a series of bold demands. The memorandum is the best proof of the fact that the Conference took decisions independently, and not at the command of the Nazis. In it first of all should be highlighted the protest against the Nazis’ not allowing the Russian clergy abroad to go to the occupied territories of the USSR. The memorandum demanded ‘the removal of all obstacles hindering the free movement of bishops from this side of the front’, and the reunion of bishop ‘on occupied territories and abroad’. (A.K. Nikitin, *Polozhenie russkoj pravoslavnoj obschiny v Germanii v period natsistkogo rezhima (1933-1945 gg.)* [The Situation of the Russian Orthodox Community in Germany in the Nazi period (1933-1945)], Annual Theological Conference PSTBI, Moscow, 1998). A vivid expression of this protest was the consecration by the participants of the Conference of Bishop Gregory (Boriskevich). He was consecrated for the Belorussian Autonomous Church and received the title of Bishop of Gomel and Mozyr. At the Council an appeal to Russian believers was agreed. The conference did not send any greetings to Hitler or other leaders of the Third Reich. The third agreed point was unexpected for the Nazi institutions. De facto it contained a critique of German policy in relation to the Russian Church and included demands for greater freedom: ‘(1) The free development and strengthening of the Orthodox Church in the occupied regions and the unification of all Orthodox ecclesiastical provinces liberated from Soviet power with the Orthodox Church Abroad under one common ecclesiastical leadership would serve as an earnest of the greater success of these parts of the Russian Church in the struggle with atheist communism... (3) It is necessary to give Russian workers in Germany free satisfaction of all their spiritual needs. (4) In view of the great quantity of various Russian military units in the German army, it is necessary to create an institution of military priests... (6) A more energetic preaching of the Orthodox religio-moral world-view... (9) Petition for the introduction of apologetic programmes on the radio... (10) The organization of theological libraries attached to the parishes... (13) Giving Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities the possibility of opening theological schools and the organization of pastoral and religio-moral courses.’”<sup>236</sup>

As the war progressed and the behaviour of the Germans towards the Russians became steadily crueller, the attitude of the Russian Orthodox to them changed.

---

<sup>235</sup> G.M. Soldatov, personal communication.

<sup>236</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, pp. 64-65; M.V. Shkarovsky, *RPTsZ na Balkanakh v gody Vtoroj Mirovoj Vojny* [ROCOR in the Balkans in the years of the Second World War]; Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), *Arkhiejskij Synod vo II Mirovuiu Vojnu* [The Hierarchical Synod in World War II].

This was reflected in the words of Metropolitan Anastasy in October, 1945, in response to Patriarch Alexis' charge that ROCOR sympathised with the Nazis: "... The Patriarch is not right to declare that 'the leaders of the ecclesiastical life of the Russian emigration' performed public prayers for the victories of Hitler'. The Hierarchical Synod never prescribed such prayers and even forbade them, demanding that Russian people prayed at that time only *for the salvation of Russia*. Of course, it is impossible to conceal the now well-known fact that, exhausted by the hopelessness of their situation and reduced almost to despair by the terror reigning in Russia, Russian people both abroad and in Russia itself placed hopes on Hitler, who declared an irreconcilable war against communism (as is well-known, this is the explanation for the mass surrender of the Russian armies into captivity at the beginning of the war), but when it became evident that he was in fact striving to conquer Ukraine, Crimea and the Caucasus and other rich regions of Russia, and that he not only despised the Russian people, but was even striving to annihilate it, and that in accordance with his command our prisoners had been starved to death, and that the German army during its retreat had burned and destroyed to their foundations Russian cities and villages on their path, and had killed or led away their population, and had condemned hundreds of thousands of Jews with women and children to death, forcing them to dig graves for themselves, then the hearts of all reasonable people - except those who 'wanted to be deceived' - turned against him..."<sup>237</sup>

G.M. Soldatov writes: "It was suggested to the metropolitan [by the Germans] that he issue an appeal to the Russian people calling on them to cooperate with the German army, which was going on a crusade to liberate Russia from the Bolsheviks. If he were to refuse to make the address, Vladyka was threatened with internment. However, the metropolitan refused, saying that German policy and the purpose of the crusade was unclear to him. In 1945 his Holiness Patriarch Gabriel of Serbia witnessed to Metropolitan Anastasy's loyalty to Serbia and the Germans' distrust of him..."

"Referring to documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other departments of the German government, the historian M.V. Shkarovsky pointed out that Metropolitan Anastasy and the clergy of ROCOR were trying to go to Russia to begin organizing missionary and charitable work there, but this activity did not correspond to the plans of Germany, which wanted to see Russia weak and divided in the future."<sup>238</sup>

Nevertheless, of the two alternatives - the Germans or the Soviets - ROCOR under the leadership of Metropolitan Anastasy considered the latter the more dangerous enemy. For Soviet power had been anathematized at the Russian Local Council in 1918, and had subjected the Russian Church to a

---

<sup>237</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>238</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 13; Averky, *op. cit.*, p. xi..

persecution that was unprecedented in the history of Christianity. Thus in November, 1944 Metropolitan Anastasy addressed the Russian Liberation Movement (the “Vlasovites”) as follows: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! From ancient times there has existed such a custom in the Russian land; before undertaking any good work, especially a collective work, they used to ask the blessing of God on it. And you have gathered here, dear brothers and fellow-countrymen, you workers and inspirer of the Russian national movement, thereby demonstrating the historical link of the great work of the liberation of Russia with the actions of our fathers and great-grandfathers... We are now all united by one feeling – a feeling of deadly irreconcilability with the Bolshevik evil and a flaming desire to extirpate it on the Russian land. For we know that as long as it reigns there, no rational human life is possible, no spiritual movement forward; as long as this evil threatens both our fatherland and the whole of Europe, death and destruction will be established everywhere. And insofar as you, dear brothers and sisters, are striving to crush this terrible evil... you are doing a truly patriotic, even more than that, universal work, and the Church cannot not bless your great and holy beginning... Dear brothers and sisters, let us all unite around this Liberation Movement of ours, let each of us struggle on this path and help the common great work of the liberation of our Homeland, until this terrible evil of Bolshevism falls and our tormented Russia is raised from her bed...”<sup>239</sup>

### *The Soviet Propaganda Offensive*

After the victory of the Soviets in the Second World War, many Russian émigrés were swept up by a feeling of nostalgia for what they thought was their homeland, and, in the words of the writer Vladimir Nabokov, began to “fraternize with the Soviets because they sense in the Soviet Union the Soviet Union of the Russian people”<sup>240</sup>.

Typical of the feelings of many at this time were the following words of Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris, full of emotion and nostalgia but with no *spiritual, ecclesiastical* content: “The holy Mother Russian Church is calling us to return to her bosom. Shall we decline this maternal call? Our soul has suffered enough in exile abroad. It is time to go home. The higher ecclesiastical authorities promise us a peaceful development of church life. I want to kiss my native Russian land. We want peace in the bosom of our native Mother Church – both us old men, in order to find a final peace, and the young and the middle-aged, in order to work on the regeneration of the Homeland, and to heal her yawning wounds. Without fear or doubt, and

---

<sup>239</sup> I.L. Solonevich, “Rossia v kontslagere” (Russia in the concentration camp), *Volia naroda* (The Will of the People), November 22, 1944; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, pp. 78-79.

<sup>240</sup> Nabokov, in B. Boyd, *Nabokov: The American Years*, London, 1992, p. 85.

without disturbance, let us go to our native land: it is so good, so beautiful..."<sup>241</sup>

Many were persuaded by the MP's pro-Soviet propaganda. Thus soon after the visit of the MP's Metropolitan Nicholas (Yarushevich) to Paris in 1945 a law on Soviet passports was passed (on June 14, 1946), after which more than 3000 Russians living in France hurried to the Soviet embassy to take their passports.<sup>242</sup> In September, 1945 75 Eulogian parishes were united with the MP. The question of Eulogius' ban, placed on him by the MP 15 years earlier, was not even discussed, and Nicholas and Eulogius concelebrated in the church of St. Alexander Nevsky. On September 11 the MP decreed that Metropolitan Eulogius should be exarch of these. However, on December 25, 1945 the Soviet deputy foreign minister V. Dekanozov wrote to G. Karpov: "The successes of Nicholas of Krutitsa have not been established and could easily be destroyed. Comrade Bogomolov (the ambassador in France) thinks that the sending of constant representatives of the MP to Paris should be speeded up and the first successes of Nicholas confirmed, otherwise the Anglo-Americans will seize the foreign Orthodox organizations into their hands and turn them into a weapon against us" (GARF, f. 6991, op. 1, d. 65, l. 452). Metropolitan Eulogius twice asked the Ecumenical Patriarch to allow him to return to the MP, but no reply ensued, and he remained dependent on Constantinople, by whom he was also named exarch.<sup>243</sup>

Sergius Shumilo writes: "It was precisely thanks to the lying pro-Soviet propaganda of the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate that tens of thousands of émigrés, among whom were quite a few clergy and even bishops, believing in the spectre of freedom, began to return to the U.S.S.R. at the end of the Second World War, where the Soviet concentration camps and prisons were waiting for them... These tragic pages of the history of our Fatherland have been sealed by rivers of innocent blood on all succeeding generations. And to a great degree the blame for this, for the tens of thousands of destroyed lives and crippled destinies, lies on the first Soviet patriarch Sergius Stragorodsky and his church, who by deed and word served the God-fighting Soviet totalitarian system..."<sup>244</sup>

No less tragic was the fate of those forcibly returned by the western governments, who felt compelled to carry out the repatriation agreements they had signed with Stalin in Yalta. And so "from 1945 to 1947," writes G.M. Soldatov, "2,272,000 people were handed over by the Allies to the USSR. Of these more than 600,000 had served in the 'eastern forces' of the German

---

<sup>241</sup> Eulogius, *Puti moej zhizni* (The Ways of My Life), p. 613; in Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 81.

<sup>242</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>243</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 94.

<sup>244</sup> Shumilo, "Sovietskij Rezhim i 'Sovietskaia Tserkov'" v 40-e-50-e gody XX stoletia" (The Soviet Regime and the 'Soviet Church' in the 40s and 50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=678>.

army.<sup>245</sup> About 200,000 managed to remain in the West,”<sup>246</sup> thanks especially to the efforts of Protopresbyter George Grabbe and other ROCOR clergy, who organized evacuation committees in all three of the western zones of Germany.

The largest category of those forcibly repatriated was composed of those who had fought in the Soviet army. Protopriest Michael Arlov describes their fate: “I am already a rather elderly person. I remember quite well the years right after the war, 1945, 1946, and how Moscow was literally flooded with cripples, soldiers who were missing arms and legs, returning from the war, and then, suddenly, they all disappeared. Only later did I learn that they were all picked up and packed off to die on the island of Valaam, in order not to spoil the view in the capital. There was no monastery there then. You can just imagine for yourselves the conditions that they had to endure there while living out their last days. They were so poor, and were reduced to begging in order to survive. This is how they were treated, just so that the capital should not be spoiled by their presence! This I remember quite well. Besides this, as we all know that, because of Stalin and his military leaders, an enormous number of Soviet citizens were taken out of the country as prisoners. The government immediately disowned them; they were immediately branded traitors. And the consequences of this were that when they, for some reason or another, came back to our country, most of them were whisked off to Stalin’s labour camps. This is how they treated the veterans then...”<sup>247</sup>

### *The Tragedy of the Vlasovites*

Another category among those forcibly repatriated was composed of the soldiers who had fought on the German side in General A.A. Vlasov’s “Russian Liberation Army” – not out of sympathy for the Nazis, but simply in order to liberate their homeland from a still greater tyranny. These included many who had fought in the Russian civil war on the side of the Whites and in alliance with the western powers.

---

<sup>245</sup> On these “Vlasovites”, see Joachim Goffman, *Vlasov protiv Stalina (Vlasov against Stalin)*, Moscow, 2005 (V.M.).

<sup>246</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*, p. 11, footnote 6. However, Shumilo (*op. cit.*) gives a still higher figure: “at the end of the war, with the cooperation of the governments of the western allied countries, more than 6 million ‘Soviet’ prisoners of war, ‘Osty’ workers, refugees and émigrés were forcibly repatriated to the U.S.S.R. up to 1948. The majority of them perished within the walls of Stalin’s NKVD.”

<sup>247</sup> Arlov, “Avoiding participation in the Great Victory Services”, sermon given on May 8, 2005, *Vertograd*, May 18, 2005; translated in *The Hoffman Wire*, May 18, 2005. Shumilo writes: “Under the pretext of restoring ‘socialist legality’ whole families, and even settlements, were sent to Siberia, mainly from Western Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltic region. By the end of the 40s, Soviet Marshal Zhukov had ordered the forcible removal from Western Ukraine to Siberia, Kazakhstan and other regions of more than 600,000 people” (*op. cit.*). Alexander Yakovlev writes that during the war the authorities executed 157,000 Red Army soldiers (the equivalent of fifteen divisions) and almost a million were arrested (*A Century of Russian Violence in Soviet Russia*, Yale University Press, 2003).

In May, 1945, in Lienz in Austria, “the English occupying authorities handed over to Stalin to certain death some tens of thousands of Cossacks who had fought in the last months of the war on the side of Germany. Eye-witnesses of this drama recall that the hand-over began right during the time of the final liturgy, which Smersh did not allow to finish. Many Cossacks tried to hurl themselves into the abyss so as not to be delivered to the communists, and the first shots were heard from the Soviet occupational zone already a few minutes after the hand-over. It is interesting that the then head of ROCOR, Metropolitan Anastasy, blessed the Cossacks who had formally ended their lives through suicide because they did not want to fall into the hands of the Reds, to be given a church burial. ‘Their actions,’ he wrote, ‘are closer to the exploit of St. Pelagia of Antioch, who hurled herself from a tall tower so as escape desecration [rape].’...”<sup>248</sup>

A similar tragedy took place in Kempten, this time at the hands of the Americans. On August 25, 1945, Metropolitan Anastasy wrote about it to General Eisenhower from Munich, where ROCOR had moved its headquarters earlier in the year: “After seven years of terrible war, the sun of peace has arisen over the suffering earth. This peace was won by the heroism of the Allied Armies and by the wisdom, courage and self-sacrificial valour of these leaders. Among these names yours stands in the first place. These names will be blessed by those people to whom the victory of the Allied Armies returned freedom. It was with a feeling of profound satisfaction that this victory was greeted by émigrés from various countries who now live in Germany... Only the Russians, of whom there were more in Germany than the representatives of any other nation, were deprived of this joy. They were forced to remain in a foreign land because between them and their Home was a wall which their conscience and common sense did not allow them to cross... The Russians, of course, love their homeland no less than the French, the Belgians or the Italians love theirs. The Russians are nostalgic for their homeland. If, in spite of this, they still prefer to remain in a foreign land, having no domicile, often hungry and with no juridical defence, this is only for one reason: they want to preserve the greatest value on earth – freedom: freedom of conscience, freedom of the word, the right to property and personal security. Many of them have already grown old and would like to die in their homeland, but this is impossible as long as there reigns there a power which is based on terror and the suppression of the human personality... It is a remarkable fact that not only intelligentsia, but also peasants and simple workers, who left Russia after 1941, when it entered into war, and who were brought up in the conditions of Soviet life, do not want to return to Soviet Russia. When attempts were made to deport them, they cried out in despair and prayed for mercy. Sometimes they even committed suicide, preferring death in a foreign land to returning to a homeland where only

---

<sup>248</sup> A. Soldatov, *Vertograd*, May 18, 2005; Archbishop Savva (Raevsky), “Lienz”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 56, № 4, 2005, pp. 2-8.

sufferings await them. Such a tragic event took place on August 12 in Kempten. In this place, in the DP camp, there was a large concentration of Russian émigrés, that is, people who had left Russia after the revolution, and also former Soviet citizens who a little later expressed their desire to remain abroad. When the American soldiers appeared at the camp with the aim of dividing these émigrés into two categories and hand over the former Soviet citizens into the hands of the Soviets, they found all the émigrés in church ardently praying to God that He save them from deportation. Being completely defenceless and abandoned, they considered the church to be their last and only refuge. They offered no active resistance. The people only kneeled and prayed for mercy, trying, in complete despair, to kiss the hands and even the feet of the officers. In spite of this, they were forcibly expelled from the church. The soldiers dragged women and children by the hair and beat them. Even the priests were not left in peace. The priests tried by all means to defend their flock, but without success. One of them, an old and respected priest, was dragged away by the beard. Another spat blood out of his mouth after one of the soldiers, trying to pull the cross out of his hands, struck him in the face. The soldiers rushed into the altar in pursuit of the people. The iconostasis, which separates the sanctuary from the church, was broken in two places, the altar was overthrown and several icons were hurled to the ground. Several people were wounded, two tried to poison themselves. One woman tried to save her child by throwing it through the window, but the man outside who caught this child in his arms was wounded by a bullet in the stomach. You can imagine what a huge impression this made on all the witnesses. It especially shocked the Russians, who were in now way expecting such behaviour from American soldiers. Up to that point they had seen in them only help and support. The American authorities have always shown respect and goodwill to Russian churches and church organizations. Many Russians strove to get into the American zone of occupation because of their hope of being defended by the valorous American army... The Russian people consider the tragedy in Kempten to be an isolated case, which took place because of a misunderstanding. They firmly believe that nothing like will ever happen again. They hope that benevolent help will be given to them as before. They are convinced that the victorious American Army, the Army of a country which is glorified by its love for freedom and humanity, will understand their desire to defend their finest national and religious ideals, for the sake of which they have been suffering for more than 25 years. We joyfully note that we, Russian émigrés in Europe, are not alone in this respect. We have recently received news from the bishops of our Church in the United States that they have not agreed to recognize the newly elected patriarch in Russia. They consider that it would be incompatible with their feeling of dignity and with their priestly conscience to be in subjection to an institution that is under the complete control of the Soviet government, which is trying to use it for its own ends. The voice of our brothers speaks about the convictions of their numerous flock in the USA... We are strengthened in the belief that we stand on the right path in defending our independence from the



Muscovite ecclesiastical and political authorities until the establishment of a new order in our country that is based on the principle of true democracy, that is, freedom, brotherhood and justice. In obtaining a glorious victory together with its allies, and in pushing its frontiers forward, Russia could become the happiest of countries, if only if returned to a healthy political and social life. Being convinced that the victory of eternal truth will finally triumph, we continually pray that better days come for her, for Russia, and that peace and prosperity may be established throughout the world after the days of war have passed..."<sup>249</sup>

### Conclusion

Archbishop Averky witnesses that "Vladyka Metropolitan never displayed any extremism in anything, but always behaved with complete dignity, as a true Hierarch of God."<sup>250</sup> This quality is particularly evident in his handling of the extremely difficult political situation that confronted him during the period of the Third Reich. As a Russian Orthodox archpastor, he longed more than anything for the liberation of his country from the Bolshevik yoke, and was completely consistent in his unrelenting condemnation of Bolshevism. But he did not fall into the extreme of supporting the Nazis unreservedly. On the contrary: he supported them only so long as they supported Orthodoxy, but never flattered them and never supported their cruel excesses, and sincerely welcomed their defeat at the hands of the western allies.

However, the same lack of extremism cannot be attributed to Vladyka Anastasy's opponents, and especially to the Moscow Patriarch who hypocritically accused him of sympathising with the Nazis while himself cravenly bowing down to the most evil and destructive of tyrants, calling him "the chosen one of the Lord, who leads our fatherland to prosperity and glory". Indeed, the MP's cult of Stalin knows no parallel in Christian history, and Metropolitan Anastasy was telling no more than the sober truth when he wrote that this was the point "where the subservience of man borders already on blasphemy. Really – can one tolerate that a person stained with blood from head to foot, covered with crimes like leprosy and poisoned deeply with the poison of godlessness, should be named 'the chosen of the Lord', could be destined to lead our homeland 'to prosperity and glory'? Does this not amount to casting slander and abuse on God the Most High Himself, Who, in such a case, would be responsible for all the evil that has been going on already for many years in our land ruled by the Bolsheviks headed by Stalin? The atom bomb, and all the other destructive means invented by modern technology, are indeed less dangerous than the *moral disintegration* which the highest representatives of the civil and church authorities have put into the Russian soul by their example. The breaking of the atom brings with it only

---

<sup>249</sup> Prot. A. Kiselev, *Oblik gen. A.A. Vlasova* (The Face of General A.A. Vlasov), appendix VI; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 90-93.

<sup>250</sup> Averky, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

physical devastation and destruction, whereas the *corruption of the mind, heart and will* entails the *spiritual death* of a whole nation..."<sup>251</sup>

(First Published in *Vernost*, N 39, March, 2006)

---

<sup>251</sup> I.M. Andreyev, *Is the Grace of God present in the Soviet Church?* Wildwood, Canada: Monastery Press, 2000, pp. 32-33 (with some changes in the translation).

## **21. A DOGMATIC-CANONICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROCOR-MP UNIA**

*May Satan not seize me, and tear me from Thy hand and fold.*  
Morning Prayers.

*O Lord Who didst send down Thy Most Holy Spirit at the Third Hour upon Thine  
Apostles, take not Him, O Good One, from us...*  
Prayer of the Third Hour.

St. Gregory the Theologian said: not every ecclesiastical union is pleasing to God, and an honourable war is preferable to a shameful peace. In the political sphere this is well understood: the Munich agreement between Chamberlain and Hitler in 1938 has gone down in the annals of history as an example of a shameful peace that not only did not remove the threat of war, but made the war, when it came, much more costly than it would have been if the courageous and honourable course had been chosen at the beginning. If this is fully understandable in the political sphere, why is it so difficult to understand in the spiritual sphere, where so much more is at stake, where a dishonourable peace with a spiritual enemy leads not to the killing of bodies, but to the eternal death of thousands of souls? The answer is: because men have ceased to think spiritually, but instead are ruled by carnal categories, fallen emotions. And so the Lord says of them: "My Spirit will not always remain with these men, because they are carnal" (Genesis 6.4).

The proposed unia between ROCOR and the MP is a clear example of an ecclesiastical union propelled not by spiritual thinking, not by the overcoming of dogmatic and canonical obstacles through repentance and spiritual love, but first of all, by political and economic interests – the interests of the KGB leadership of the Russian Federation, which has been driving this unia from the beginning, and then by fallen emotions masquerading as spiritual motives – love of Russia (but which Russia do they love – Holy Rus' or the neo-Soviet Russia of Putin?), and fear of isolation from the rest of Orthodoxy (but which Orthodoxy do they fear to be separated from – the KGB/Masonic/Ecumenist "Orthodoxy" of the World Council of Churches, or the True Orthodoxy of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia?).

This article seeks to examine the dogmatic and canonical obstacles that remain in the path of any honourable Church unia. It should be noted at the outset that, far from these barriers decreasing with time, they have actually *increased* since the original break in communion between ROCOR and Metropolitan Sergius' MP in 1927. At that time only Sergianism separated the two. And yet Sergianism alone was enough to create the biggest schism in the Orthodox Church since 1054. Now there is also Ecumenism, to mention only the most important and intractable of all the obstacles...

## I. Sergianism

The nature of Sergianism is often misunderstood. In essence it is *the sin of Judas*. Judas was one of the closest disciples of Christ, who, having lost faith in the Divinity of His Teacher and in the ultimate victory of truth over falsehood, chose to betray Christ in exchange for thirty pieces of silver and immunity from persecution. Metropolitan Sergius did essentially the same through his Declaration of 1927. In exchange for some material benefits and immunity from persecution (he died in his bed), he betrayed Christ by identifying the interests of the Church with the interests of the God-hating Bolsheviks, whom the Church itself had anathematized in 1918. He did this not in word only (through his Declaration), but in deed also, by deposing his fellow-hierarchs who resisted him, and by labelling them as “counter-revolutionaries” – the equivalent of a death-sentence in the USSR.

It is sometimes argued that Sergius was justified because, as he himself put it, he was “saving the Church” by his actions. The idea that the Church, “the pillar and ground of the Truth” (I Timothy 3.15), to which the Lord has promised that it would “prevail against the gates of hell” (Matthew 16.18), needs to be saved by the lies of sinful men is in itself a fearsome heresy, a denial, as several Catacomb Hieromartyrs pointed out, of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. But in any case, Sergius saved nobody but himself (and that only in this temporal life). After most of the confessors of the Catacomb Church had been imprisoned or shot in the early 1930s, the majority of those who followed Sergius were imprisoned or shot in the late 1930s. By the beginning of the Second World War, there were only four sergianist bishops at liberty in the whole of the Soviet Union, most of the churches and monasteries had been destroyed, and the sergianist church presented a picture of complete moral and material devastation.

Another argument offered in defence of Sergianism is that similar compromises were made in the past by Orthodox hierarchs – in particular, by the Greeks under Turkish rule. But this is a slander against the Greek Orthodox. Were the Greek hierarchs, as a condition of the free functioning of their church administration, compelled to accept Islam and work for the triumph of Islam throughout the world? They were not. And yet Sergius and his followers welcomed the revolution, condemned its enemies and worked tirelessly in the interests of the world revolution.

Here is a variant on this argument: “Sergianism is supposed to be a violation of the 30<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon: ‘If a bishop, using secular authorities, receives through them Episcopal power in the Church: let him be deposed and excommunicated, and all those who commune with him.’ However, many Orthodox bishops received their power in this way, including very

many in the pre-revolutionary Russian Church. Therefore they, too, were Sergianists by your reasoning. But they are not; so neither is Sergius."

This argument ignores the vast difference between the secular authorities before and after the revolution, and between the ways in which these authorities worked. Before the revolution, the authorities were Orthodox and were genuinely interested in the flourishing of the Orthodox Church. While there were isolated cases in which the authorities imposed their will unjustly on the Church (for example, in the deposition of St. Arseny of Rostov), these were exceptions rather than the rule, and in general they did not prevent the promotion of pious and right-believing men to administer the Church. After the revolution, however, the "authorities" were not only not Orthodox, but anti-Orthodox and excommunicated from the Church; and they did everything in their power to impose unsuitable – that is, pro-communist – candidates for the episcopate. If, up to 1927, the bishops successfully resisted this pressure, after Sergius' declaration (more precisely: from the time Sergius formed his first Synod in May, 1927) the resistance disappeared, and the way was open for complete domination of the Church by the antichristian authorities.

A much closer parallel to Sergianism, which the Sergianists do not like to admit, is with the renovationists who seized power in the Russian Church in 1922 on a pro-communist platform, and were anathematized by Patriarch Tikhon in 1923. In 1937 St. Cyril, Metropolitan of Kazan spoke about "the renovationist nature of Sergianism"<sup>252</sup>. It follows that Sergius himself, who, together with the second Soviet "patriarch", Alexis, was a former renovationist, and had therefore already once fallen away from the Church, fell away a second time into essentially the same mortal sin.

The essential identity of renovationism and Sergianism is indicated by the fact that, after Sergius' pact with Stalin in 1943, almost the whole of the renovationist "church" poured, without repentance, into the sergianist church in order to make up the latter's depleted ranks.

Thus on October 12, 1943 Karpov, the KGB head of the Soviets' Council for the Affairs of the Orthodox Church, wrote to Stalin and Molotov: "The renovationist movement earlier played a constructive role but in recent years has lost its significance and base of support. On this basis, and taking into account the patriotic stance of the Sergiite church, the Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs has decided not to prevent the dissolution of the renovationist church and the transfer of the renovationist clergy and parishes to the patriarchal, Sergiite church." On October 16 Karpov sent secret

---

<sup>252</sup> Letter of Metropolitan Cyril to Hieromonk Leonid, February 23 / March 8, 1937, *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, № 16, August 15/28, 1997, p. 7.

instructions to the regions not to hinder the transfer of renovationists to the Sergianist church.<sup>253</sup>

Since Karpov wanted the renovationists to join the state church, the rules for their reception were relaxed. Thus in 1944 Metropolitan Alexis (Simansky), the future patriarch, severely upbraided Bishop Manuel (Lemeshevsky) for forcing “venerable” renovationist protopriests to “turn somersaults”, i.e. repent, before the people, in accordance with Patriarch Tikhon’s rules.<sup>254</sup>

As Roslof writes: “The relaxation of rules by the patriarchate reflected the needs of both church and state. The patriarchal synod had full backing from the government and expected to emerge as the sole central authority for the Orthodox Church. So it could afford to show mercy. At the same time, the patriarchate faced a scarcity of clergy to staff reopened parishes and to run the dioceses. Sergii’s bishops had problems finding priests for churches that had never closed. This shortage of clergy was compounded by the age and poor education of the candidates who were available. The patriarchate saw properly supervised red priests as part of the solution to the problem of filling vacant posts.”<sup>255</sup>

Another argument put forward in defence of the Sergianists is that this was a passing phenomenon dependent on the existence of Soviet power, which passed into history with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. This is a little like saying that after the death of Annas and Caiaphas, or the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the sin of Judas ceased to be a sin, and those who betrayed Christ were automatically exonerated! But sin is a spiritual phenomenon which is not expunged by external political changes, but can only be expunged by *repentance*.

“But the patriarch *has* repented!” the Sergianists declare - or rather, this is not said by the MP Sergianists, who see nothing to repent of in “Sergianism”, but by those defenders of the MP in ROCOR who are desperate to justify themselves. They point to an interview given in September, 1991 to *30 Dias*, in which the patriarch said: “A church that has millions of faithful cannot go into the catacombs. The hierarchy of the church has taken the sin on their souls: the sin of silence and of lying for the good of the people in order that they not be completely removed from real life. In the government of the diocese and as head of the negotiations for the patriarchate of Moscow, I also had to cede one point in order to defend another. I ask pardon of God, I ask pardon, understanding and prayers of all those whom I harmed through the

---

<sup>253</sup> Karpov, in Edward E. Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946*, Indiana University Press, 2002, pp. 194-195.

<sup>254</sup> See Metropolitan John (Snychev) of St. Petersburg, *Mitropolit Manuil (Lemeshevsky) (Metropolitan Manuel Lemeshevsky)*, St. Petersburg, 1993, p. 185.

<sup>255</sup> Roslof, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

concessions, the silence, the forced passivity or the expressions of loyalty that the hierarchy may have manifested during that period".<sup>256</sup>

This is closer to self-justification than repentance. It is similar to the statement of Metropolitan Nicholas (Corneanu) of Banat of the Romanian Patriarchate, who confessed that he had collaborated with the Securitate, the Romanian equivalent of the KGB, and had defrocked the priest Fr. Calciu for false political reasons, but nevertheless declared that if he had not made such compromises he would have been forced to abandon his post, "which in the conditions of the time would not have been good for the Church". In other words, as Vladimir Kozyrev writes: "It means: 'I dishonoured the Church and my Episcopal responsibility, I betrayed those whom I had to protect, I scandalized my flock. But all this I had to do for the good of the Church!'"<sup>257</sup>

In another interview in 1997 Patriarch Alexis said, referring to the Church in the time of Patriarch Tikhon: "The Church could not, did not have the right, to go into the catacombs. She remained together with the people and drank to the dregs the cup of sufferings that fell to its lot."<sup>258</sup> Patriarch Alexis here forgot to mention that Patriarch Tikhon specifically blessed Michael Zhizhilenko, the future Hieromartyr Maximus of Serpukhov, to become a secret catacomb bishop if the pressure on the Church from the State became too great. As for his claim that the sergianists shared the cup of the people's suffering, this must be counted as conscious hypocrisy. It is well known that the Soviet hierarchs lived a life of considerable luxury, while lifting not a finger for the Catacomb Christians and dissidents sent to torments and death in KGB prisons!

In its "Jubilee" Council of August, 2000 the MP approved a "social document" which, among other things, recognised that "the Church must refuse to obey the State" "if the authorities force the Orthodox believers to renounce Christ and His Church". This was immediately seized on by supporters of the unia as "proof" that Sergianism had been repented of. However, on the very same page we find: "But even the persecuted Church is called to bear the persecutions patiently, not refusing loyalty to the State that persecutes it".<sup>259</sup> We may infer from this that the MP still considers that its loyalty to the Soviet State was right and the resistance to it shown by the Catacomb Church was wrong. In fact, Sergianism as such was not mentioned in the document, much less repented of.

---

<sup>256</sup> 30 Dias (*Thirty Days*), Rome/Sao Paolo, August-September, 1991, p. 23.

<sup>257</sup> Kozyrev, "[orthodox-synod] Re: The Orthodox Episcopate of the Russian persecuted Church", [orthodox-synod@yahooogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-synod@yahooogroups.com). 28 November, 2002.

<sup>258</sup> Quoted by Anatoly Krasikov, "'Tretij Rim' i bolsheviki (bez grifa 'sovershenno sekretno')" (The Third Rome and the Bolsheviks), in Filatov, S.B. (ed.), *Religia i prava cheloveka (Religion and Human Rights)*, Moscow: Nauka, 1996, p. 198.

<sup>259</sup> *Iubilejnij Arkhierejskij Sobor Russkoj pravoslavnoj tserkvi. Moskva 13-16 avgusta 2000 goda (The Jubilee Hierarchical Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow, 13-16 August, 2000)*, St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 159.

This is consistent with the fact that the MP has never in its entire history since 1943 shown anything other than a determination to serve whatever appears to be the strongest forces in the contemporary world. Until the fall of communism, that meant the communists. With the fall of communism, the MP was not at first sure whom she had to obey, but gradually assumed the character of a "populist" church, trying to satisfy the various factions within it (including nominally Orthodox political leaders) while preserving an appearance of unity.

In this connection Fathers Vladimir Savitsky, Valentine (Salomakh) and Nicholas Savchenko write: "The politics of 'populism' which the MP is conducting today is a new distortion of true Christianity. Today this politics (and the ideology standing behind it) is a continuation and development of 'sergianism', a metamorphosis of the very same disease. Today it seems to us that we have to speak about this at the top of our voices. Other problems, such as the heresy of ecumenism and 'sergianism' in the strict sense, while undoubtedly important, are of secondary importance by comparison with the main aim of the MP, which is to be an 'all-people' Church. In fact, in the 'people' (understood in a broad sense, including unbelievers and 'eclectics') there always have been those who are for ecumenism and those who are against. Therefore we see that the MP is ready at the same time to participate in the disgusting sin of ecumenism and to renounce it and even condemn it. It is exactly the same with 'sergianism' (understood as the dependence of the Church on the secular authorities). The MP will at the same time in words affirm its independence (insofar as there are those who are for this independence) and listen to every word of the authorities and follow them (not only because that is convenient, but also because it thus accepted in the 'people', and the authorities are 'elected by the people'). In a word, it is necessary to condemn the very practice and ideology of the transformation of the MP into a Church 'of all the people'."<sup>260</sup>

This analysis has been confirmed by events since the former KGB Colonel Putin came to power in January, 2000. The MP has adopted a submissive role in relation to the neo-Soviet power, not protesting against the restoration of the red flag to the armed forces and approving the retention of the music of the Soviet national anthem. Nor does it discipline its priests who praise Stalin.

On November 9, 2001, the patriarch threw off the mask of repentance completely, stating in defence of Sergius' Declaration: "This was a clever step by which Metropolitan Sergius tried to save the church and clergy. In declaring that the members of the Church want to see themselves as part of the motherland and want to share her joys and sorrows, he tried to show to

---

<sup>260</sup> Protopriest Vladimir Savitsky, Hieromonk Valentine (Salomakh) and Deacon Nicholas Savchenko, "Pis'mo iz Sankt-Peterburga" (Letter from St. Petersburg), *Otkliki* (Responses), part 1, Paris, 2001, p. 92.



those who were persecuting the church and who were destroying it that we, the children of the church, want to be loyal citizens so that the affiliation of people with the church would not place them outside the law.’<sup>261</sup>

There followed an official justification of Sergianism. Thus on July 18, 2002, the Moscow Synod ratified a document entitled “The relationships between the Russian Orthodox Church and the authorities in the 20s and 30s”, which declared: “The aim of normalising the relationship with the authorities cannot be interpreted as a betrayal of Church interests. It was adopted by the holy Patriarch Tikhon, and was also expressed in the so-called ‘Epistle of the Solovki Bishops’ in 1926, that is, one year before the publication of ‘The Epistle of the deputy patriarchal locum tenens and temporary patriarchal Synod’. The essence of the changes in the position of the hierarchy consisted in the fact that the Church, having refused to recognise the legitimacy of the new power established after the October revolution in 1917, as the power became stronger later, had to recognise it as a state power and establish bilateral relations with it. This position is not blameworthy; historically, the Church has more than once found herself in a situation in which it has had to cooperate with non-orthodox rulers (for instance, in the period of the Golden Horde or the Muslim Ottoman Empire).”<sup>262</sup>

However, as we have pointed out, Soviet power was very different from the Tatars or Ottomans, and “bilateral relations” with it, unlike with those powers, involved the betrayal of the Orthodox Faith and falling under the anathema of the Church. Moreover, if the Church at first refused to recognise Soviet power, but then (in 1927) began to recognise it, the question arises: which position was the correct one? There can be no question but that the position endorsed by the Russian Council of 1917-18 was the correct one, and that the Sergianist Moscow Patriarchate, by renouncing that position, betrayed the truth – and continues to betray it to the present day through its symbiotic relationship with a government that openly declares itself to be the heir of the Soviet State.

As recently as January 24, 2005 Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev) of Smolensk, head of the MP’s Department of Foreign Relations, confirmed that the MP does not condemn Sergianism: “We recognize that the model of Church-State relations [in the Soviet period] did not correspond to tradition. But we are not condemning those who realized this model, because there was no other way of preserving the Church. The Church behaved in the only way she could at that time. There was another path into the catacombs, but there could be no catacombs in the Soviet space...”<sup>263</sup>

---

<sup>261</sup> <http://www.ripnet.org/besieged/rparocora.htm?>

<sup>262</sup> *Moskovskij Tserkovnij Vestnik (Moscow Church Herald)*, №№ 14-15, pp. 243-244; quoted by Fr. Michael Ardov, “‘Sergians’ continue in the same spirit”, <http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=english&id=13>.

<sup>263</sup> Gundiaev, in *Vertograd-Inform*, № 504, February 2, 2005.

In other words: "There is a wide path, the path of Sergianism; and there is a narrow path, the path of the Catacomb Church. We chose the wide path, and we will choose it again. There is 'no space' for the other path beside us..."

## II. The New Martyrs

The problem of the New Martyrs is considered non-existent by many in the present debate. After all, has not the MP canonized the New Martyrs as ROCOR has? And if there are some differences in who they count as martyrs, what does that matter? They accept (almost) all our martyrs, so they think the same way we do. In any case, is this a dogmatic issue?

It is in the first place a *canonical* issue, but one that directly touches on *dogmatic* issues. The 20<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Gangra declares: "If anyone shall, from a presumptuous disposition, condemn and abhor the assembly [in honour of] the martyrs, or the services performed there, and the commemoration of them, let them be anathema...." For many years the MP fell under this anathema, ignoring the decree of the Council of 1917-18 on the commemoration of the holy new martyrs, rejecting and viciously slandering them as "political criminals" and denying the very existence of a persecution against Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union. Now, in the "Jubilee" Hierarchical Sobor that took place in August, 2000, it has attempted, it would seem, to rectify this disastrous error. To what extent has it succeeded?

The major problems here from the MP's point of view were the questions of the Royal Martyrs, on the one hand, and of the martyrs of the Catacomb Church who rejected Metropolitan Sergius, on the other. Non-royal martyrs killed before the schism with the Catacomb Church could be "safely" canonized. Thus in 1989, the MP canonized Patriarch Tikhon, and in 1992 it canonized three more martyrs and set up a commission to inquire into the martyrdom of the Royal Family, about which an MP publication wrote in 1998: "No less if not more dangerous as an ecclesiastical falsification is the MP's Canonization Commission, headed by Metropolitan Juvenal (Poiarkov), which has suggested a compromise glorification of Tsar Nicholas Alexandrovich: 'Yes, he was guilty of the tragedy on Khodynka field, he hobnobbed with Rasputin, he offended the workers, the country became backward. In general as a ruler of a state he was completely useless. Most important, he brought the country to revolution. But he suffered for Christ...' Such a falsification will only continue that dirty stream of slander which the Christ-fighters began to pour out already long before 1917..."<sup>264</sup>

After nearly a decade of temporising, the MP finally, under pressure from its flock, glorified the Royal New Martyrs and many other martyrs of the Soviet yoke. The glorification of the Royal New Martyrs was a compromise

---

<sup>264</sup> *Pravoslavie ili Smert'* (Orthodoxy or Death), N 8, 1998.

decision, reflecting the very different attitudes towards them in the patriarchate. The Royal Martyrs were called "passion-bearers" rather than "martyrs", and it was made clear that they were being glorified, not for the way in which they lived their lives, but for the meekness with which they faced their deaths. This allowed the anti-monarchists to feel that Nicholas was still the "bloody Nicholas" of Soviet mythology, and that it was "Citizen Romanov" rather than "Tsar Nicholas" who had been glorified - the man rather than the monarchical principle for which he stood.

This point will become clearer if we now turn to ROCOR's canonisation of the Tsar in 1981, in which the Tsar's feat is linked closely and explicitly with the position he occupied in the Christian State: "... The criminal murder of the Imperial Family was not merely an act of malice and falsehood, not merely an act of political reprisal directed against enemies, but was precisely an act principally of the spiritual annihilation of Russian Orthodoxy... *The last tsar was murdered with his family precisely because he was a crowned ruler, the upholder of the splendid concept of the Orthodox state; he was murdered simply because he was an Orthodox tsar; he was murdered for his Orthodoxy!*"<sup>265</sup>

Again: "The Tsar-Martyr, and his family as well, suffered for Christian piety. He was opposed to the amorality and godlessness of the communists, both on principle and by virtue of his position - on principle, because he was a deeply believing Orthodox Christian; by virtue of his position, because he was a staunch Orthodox Monarch. *For this he was killed.* To ask him anything concerning the faith was unnecessary, because he gave witness before the tormentors to his steadfastness in Christian principles by his entire previous life and works, and especially by his profoundly Christian endurance of the moral torments of his imprisonment. He was a staunch defender and protector of the Christian faith, preventing the God-haters from beginning a vicious persecution against believers in Christ and against the whole Orthodox Church. *For this reason he was removed and slain...*

"It is also known... that prior to the Revolution it was proposed that the Tsar repeal the strictures against anti-Christian secret societies, and it was threatened that if he refused he would lose his throne and his life. The sovereign firmly refused this proposal. Therefore, they deprived him of his throne and killed him. Thus, he suffered *precisely* for the faith."<sup>266</sup>

Protopriest Michael Ardov has examined another part of Metropolitan Juvenal's report: "'In its approach to this subject, the Commission has striven that the glorification of the Royal Martyrs should be free from every political and other kind of time-serving. In connection with this it is necessary to stress

---

<sup>265</sup> Quoted in Fr. Alexey Young, *The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia*, San Bernardino, CA: St. Willibrord's Press, 1993, p. 84.

<sup>266</sup> Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles, "The Glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia is Our Sacred Moral Duty", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 29, N 3, May-June, 1979, pp. 24, 25.

that the canonisation of the Monarch can in no way be linked with monarchical ideology, and, moreover, does not signify the 'canonisation' of the monarchical form of government, in relation to which people's attitudes may, of course, differ.'...

"Naïve supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate are in no way able to understand why the long-awaited glorification of his Majesty was carried out in such an unintelligible manner. I can suggest to those who are perplexed a completely satisfying explanation. In 1993, the superior of church 'Nikola v Pyzhakh', Protopriest Alexander Shargunov, placed a large icon of the Tsar Martyr in his church. Two days later he was phoned from the patriarchate and told to remove it, while the superior himself had to go to Chisty Pereulok [the headquarters of the MP] to sort out the question. There the secretary of the so-called Patriarch, the so-called Bishop Arsenius, had a talk with Shargunov. In a burst of sincerity the former declared: 'We all, including the Patriarch, venerate Tsar Nicholas as a saint. But we cannot glorify him – both the communists and the democrats will rise up against us...'

"This phrase explains all the following events. Being in fear of the communists and the democrats, the 'sergianists' have for years dragged out the matter of the glorification of the Royal Martyrs. And the canonisation took place only now, in the year 2000, after the election of President Putin, when the chances of the communists returning to power have become zero – it is finally possible to stop fearing them. But the Patriarchate's fear of the 'democrats' has remained, and has perhaps got even stronger. That is why, in the 'Acts of the Jubilee Council', they speak about the crime that took place in Ekaterinburg in 1918, but there is not a word about what took place in March, 1917. But we know: the Tsar-Martyr was forced to abdicate from the Throne, not by the Bolsheviks, not by Lenin and Sverdlov, but by the traitor-generals Alexeyev and Rutsky, by the conspirator-parliamentarians Rodzyanko and Guchkov – that is, by the 'democrats' of that time. And for fear of their last-born children, not a word was spoken about the 'February revolution' at the 'Jubilee Council'...

"In his report, the 'president of the synodal commission for the canonisation of the saints', the so-called Metropolitan Juvenal said: 'We have striven also to take into account the fact of the canonisation of the Royal Family by the Russian Church Abroad in 1981, which elicited a not unambiguous reaction both in the midst of the Russian emigration, some representatives of which did not see sufficient bases for it at that time, and in Russia herself...'...

"Again a hiatus. In fact in the Patriarchate itself the glorification of the Royal Martyrs and the whole host of Russian New Martyrs and Confessors elicited a reaction that was completely unambiguous: they decisively

condemned the act of the Council of the Church Abroad and declared it to be a purely political act..."<sup>267</sup>

As regards the other martyrs, Sergius Kanaev writes: "In the report of the President of the Synodal Commission for the canonisation of the saints, Metropolitan Juvenal (Poiarkov), the criterion of holiness adopted... for Orthodox Christians who had suffered during the savage persecutions was clearly and unambiguously declared to be submission 'to the lawful leadership of the Church', which was Metropolitan Sergius and his hierarchy. With such an approach, the holiness of the 'Sergianist martyrs' was incontestable. The others were glorified or not glorified depending on the degree to which they 'were in separation from the lawful leadership of the Church'. Concerning those who were not in agreement with the politics of Metropolitan Sergius, the following was said in the report: 'In the actions of the "right" oppositionists, who are often called the "non-commemorators", one cannot find evil-intentioned, exclusively personal motives. Their actions were conditioned by their understanding of what was for the good of the Church'. In my view, this is nothing other than blasphemy against the New Martyrs and a straight apology for Sergianism. With such an approach the consciously Sergianist Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), for example, becomes a 'saint', while his ideological opponent Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, who was canonized by our Church, is not glorified. For us another fact is also important, that Metropolitan Seraphim was appointed by Sergius (Stragorodsky) in the place of Metropolitan Joseph, who had been 'banned' by him."<sup>268</sup>

Other Catacomb martyrs were "glorified" by the MP because their holiness was impossible to hide. Thus the relics of Archbishop Victor of Vyatka were found to be incorrupt and now lie in a patriarchal cathedral – although he was the very first bishop officially to break with Sergius and called him and his church organization graceless and his betrayal "worse than heresy"! The same is true of the Catacomb Elder Theodosius of Minvody, who never set foot in a MP church, but whose holiness cannot be hidden. Again, the reputation of Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan was too great to be ignored, in spite of the fact that by the end of his life his position differed in no way from that of St. Victor or St. Joseph.

Some, seeing the glorification of the Catacomb martyrs by their opponents, remembered the Lord's words: "Ye build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our

---

<sup>267</sup> Ardov, "The 'Jubilee Council' has confirmed it: the Moscow Patriarchate has finally fallen away from Orthodoxy" (Report read at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the clergy, monastics and laity of the Suzdal diocese of the Russian Orthodox [Autonomous] Church, November, 2000).

<sup>268</sup> Kanaev, "Obraschenie k pervoierarkhu RPTsZ" (Address to the First Hierarch of ROCOR), in *Otkliki*, op. cit., part 2, Paris, 2001, pp. 3-4 ; *Jubilejnij Arkhierejskij Sobor (Jubilee Hierarchical Council)*, op. cit., pp. 43, 44.

fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets'. Therefore ye bear witness against yourselves that ye are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up the measure of your fathers!" (Matthew 23.29-32).

This blasphemous canonisation of *both* the true *and* the false martyrs, thereby downgrading the exploit of the true martyrs, had been predicted by the ROCOR priest Fr. Oleg Oreshkin: "I think that some of those glorified will be from the sergianists so as to deceive the believers. 'Look,' they will say, 'he is a saint, a martyr, in the Heavenly Kingdom, and he recognized the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, so you must be reconciled with it and its fruits.' This will be done not in order to glorify martyrdom for Christ's sake, but in order to confirm the sergianist politics."<sup>269</sup>

The main thing from the MP's point of view was that their founder, Metropolitan Sergius, should be given equal status with the catacomb martyrs whom he persecuted. Thus in 1993 the patriarch said: "Through the host of martyrs the Church of Russia bore witness to her faith and sowed the seed of her future rebirth. Among the confessors of Christ we can in full measure name... his Holiness Patriarch Sergius."<sup>270</sup> By the time of the council of 2000, the MP still did not feel able to canonise Sergius – probably because it feared that it would prevent a union with ROCOR. But neither did it canonise the leader of the Catacomb Church, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd – which suggested that a later canonisation of *both* leaders was planned, but depended on the success of the negotiations between the MP and ROCOR...

The patriarch's lack of ecclesiastical principle and ecclesiological consistency in this question was pointed out by Fr. Peter Perekrestov: "In the introduction to one article ("In the Catacombs", *Sovershenno Sekretno*, № 7, 1991) Patriarch Alexis wrote the following: 'I believe that our martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for us.' At the same time, in the weekly, *Nedelya*, № 2, 1/92, the same Patriarch Alexis states that the Russian Church Abroad is a schismatic church, and adds: 'Equally uncanonical is the so-called "Catacomb" Church.' In other words, he recognizes the martyrs of the Catacomb Church, many of whom were betrayed to the godless authorities by Metropolitan Sergius's church organization..., and at the same time declares that these martyrs are schismatic and uncanonical!"<sup>271</sup>

---

<sup>269</sup> "Ierei o. Oleg otvechaet na voprosy redaktsiï" (The Priest Fr. Oleg Replies to the Questions of the Editors), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (*Orthodox Russia*), N 23 (1452), December 1/14, 1991, p. 7.

<sup>270</sup> Quoted by Fr. Peter Perekrestov, "The Schism in the Heart of Russia (Concerning Sergianism)", *Canadian Orthodox Herald*, 1999, N 4.

<sup>271</sup> Perekrestov, "Why Now?" *Orthodox Life*, vol. 44, N 6, November-December, 1994, p. 44. It is open to question whether the patriarchate's canonisation of even the true martyrs is pleasing to God. Thus when 50 patriarchal bishops uncovered the relics of Patriarch Tikhon in the Donskoj cemetery on April 5, 1992, witnesses reported that "it was even possible to recognise the face of the Patriarch from his incorrupt visage, and his mantia and mitre were also

For in the last resort, as Fr. Peter (now a leading supporter of the ROCOR-MP unia) pointed out, for the MP this whole matter was not one of truth or falsehood, but of *power*: "It is not important to them whether a priest is involved in shady business dealings or purely church activities; whether he is a democrat or a monarchist; whether an ecumenist or a zealot; whether he wants to serve Vigil for six hours or one; whether the priest serves a panikhida for the victims who defended the White House or a moleben for those who sided with Yeltsin; whether the priest wants to baptize by immersion or by sprinkling; whether he serves in the catacombs or openly; whether he venerates the Royal Martyrs or not; whether he serves according to the New or Orthodox Calendar - *it really doesn't matter*. The main thing is to commemorate Patriarch Alexis. Let the Church Abroad have its autonomy, let it even speak out, express itself as in the past, but only under one condition: *commemorate Patriarch Alexis*. This is a form of **Papism** - let the priests be married, let them serve according to the Eastern rite - it makes no difference, what is important is that they commemorate the Pope of Rome."<sup>272</sup>

The MP's act of canonising both the true and the false martyrs has several serious consequences. First, it means that, if any one was still tempted to consider that the official acts of the MP had any validity at all, he can now be assured that even the MP itself does not believe in them. For consider: Archbishop Victor, Metropolitan Cyril and the whole host of Catacomb confessors were defrocked, excommunicated and cast out of the community of the "faithful" by official acts of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod. But if these "defrocked" and "excommunicated" people are now saints in the Heavenly Kingdom, this only goes to show, *as the MP now implicitly admits*, that the actions of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod were completely uncanonical and invalid! And yet in spite of all that, the patriarch can still assert that "among the confessors of Christ we can in full measure name... his Holiness Patriarch Sergius..."

Secondly, it also shows that *the MP does not know what martyrdom is, and looks upon it in an essentially ecumenist spirit which deprives it of all meaning*. Some years ago, a writer for the Anglican "Church Times" was reviewing a book on the "martyrs" of the Anglican Reformation. In the spirit of that ecumenism that has been at the root of Anglicanism for centuries, this reviewer claimed that both the Catholics who died for their faith at the hands of the Anglicans and the Anglicans who died for their faith at the hands of the Catholics died for the truth as they saw it and so were martyrs! For it

---

preserved in complete incorruption. Witnesses also speak about a beautiful fragrance and an unusual feeling of reverential peace at that moment. But then, as some patriarchal clerics confirm, on contact with the air the relics crumbled, or - as the Catacomb Christians remark - the relics were not given into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate. Then they buried them in plaster - a blasphemous act from an Orthodox point of view..." (Eugene Polyakov, personal communication, April 5, 1992).

<sup>272</sup> Perecrestov, "Why Now?" *op. cit.*, p. 43.

was not important, wrote the reviewer, who was *right* in this conflict: the only thing that matters is that they were *sincere* in their beliefs. And he went on to deny that heresy in general even exists: the only real heresy, he said, is the belief that there is such a thing as heresy!!

The present act of the MP presupposes a very similar philosophy. It presupposes that you can be a martyr whether you oppose the Antichrist or submit to him, whether you confess the truth or lie through your teeth, whether you imitate the love of Christ or the avarice of Judas. The perfect philosophy for our lukewarm times, which have no zeal, either for or against the truth!

Now lukewarmness is achieved when hot and cold are mixed together, so that that which is “hot”, zeal for the faith, is deprived of its essential quality, while that which is “cold”, hatred for the faith, is masked by an appearance of tolerance. But the Lord abominates this attitude even more than the “cold” hatred of the truth: “Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth” (Revelation 3.16).

This lukewarmness is identified, by Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava, with “the religious-moral fall of bishops, [which is] ..... one of the most characteristic signs of the last times. Especially terrible is the fall of bishops when they fall away from the dogmas of the faith, or, as the apostle puts it, they want to pervert the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1.7). To such the apostle orders that we say anathema: Whoever will preach to you a Gospel other than that which we preached to you, he writes, let him be anathema (Galatians 1.9). And one must not linger here, he says: A heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that such a one is perverted, condemning himself (Titus 3.10-11). Otherwise, that is, for indifference to apostasy from the truth, you may be struck by the wrath of God: because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth.”<sup>273</sup>

If the Lord Himself spews such lukewarmness out of His mouth, then so should we. And this is what the Kaliningrad parish of ROCOR commendably does in its epistle to the ROCOR hierarchs of November 1/14, 2000: “What throng of new martyrs was canonized by the Moscow Patriarchate if, in that multitude, there are ‘saints’ who fought against the Church, and who later suffered at the hands of their masters - but not for Christ, having become, rather, victims who were offered up upon the altar of the revolution, just as were thousands of other Bolsheviks and liberal dreamers? A throng of new martyrs where victims and executioners, holy martyrs and ‘Christians’ (at whose orders these new martyrs were shot and sent to prisons and labour-camps), find themselves side by side?”

---

<sup>273</sup> *Pis'ma Arkhiiepiskopa Feofana Poltavskogo i Pereyaslavskogo (The Letters of Archbishop Theophanes of Poltava and Pereyaslavl)*, Jordanville, 1976, p. 29.



It has been asserted by ROCOR that the glorification of the royal new martyrs by the MP "is an initial act of repentance; hence, one of the reasons for the division [between ROCOR and the MP] has been eliminated, for the most part." The problem is: an act of repentance must employ at least a few words expressing repentance – and there is not one such word in the MP's statements.

As Hieromonk (now Bishop) Vladimir and Protopriest Sergius write: "Has such a thing ever been seen, that the bishops of God would anticipate and justify heretics and schismatics in that of which the latter do not only not think to repent, but which they even exalt to the rank and honour of 'saving the Church'? Throughout all history, the Church has not known examples of impenitent behaviour being covered over by 'love'. On the contrary, the Holy Church has always condemned any acts of 'glorification' by heretics – especially those in which true martyrs for Christ are commingled into a single whole with pseudo-martyrs (e.g. Canons 9 and 34 of the Council of Laodicea; Canon 63 of the VIth Ecumenical Council). At the same time, there is no doubt of the legitimacy of the question: do heretics have a moral and legal right, without bringing forth repentance in the True Church, to glorify those very ones whom they had betrayed? If a murderer glorifies his victim; a robber and thief of what is sacred -- the one robbed; and a blasphemer -- God, *without repenting* of the given sin, then this act of 'glorification' is not simply an 'atonement' and a setting-forth upon the way of the Lord, but an even greater blasphemy, a more refined sacrilege. For 'the virtue of heretics,' says St. John Chrysostom, 'is worse than any debauchery.' 'Not to confess one's transgressions means to increase them... Sin places upon us a blot which it is impossible to wash away with a thousand well-springs; only by tears and repentance can this be done,' says that selfsame Bishop. 'None is so good, and none so merciful of heart, as the Lord; but even He does not forgive those who do not repent.' (St. Mark the Ascetic). Hence, is not this 'glorification' by the MP comparable to that when the Roman soldiers, having put a scarlet robe upon Christ, 'glorified' Him, saying: 'Hail, King of the Jews!'?! Here we have in view not the entire Russian nation, but the very system of the MP."

In conclusion, the MP has not only not delivered itself from the burden of its past apostasy by its decision on the new martyrs: it has significantly increased that burden. The early sergianists renounced the path of confession and martyrdom and condemned those who embarked upon it – but at least they did not change the concept of martyrdom itself. The later sergianists, while continuing to confess heresy and persecute the Orthodox, have added a further sin: by placing, in the spirit of ecumenism, an equality sign between martyrdom and apostasy, they have degraded the exploits of the true saints and presented false models for emulation.

And so they fall under the anathema of Canon 34 of the Council of Laodicea: "No Christian shall forsake the martyrs of Christ, and turn to false

martyrs, that is, to those of the heretics, or those who formerly were heretics; for they are aliens from God. Let those, therefore, who go after them, be **anathema**."

### III. Ecumenism

Since the MP, led by KGB General Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad, entered the World Council of Churches in 1961, it has signed up to a long series of declarations renouncing the central tenet of Christian soteriology, namely, that salvation is in Christ alone. In the early, inter-Christian stage of ecumenism, the MP officially prayed with, and recognized the sacraments of, almost all the Catholic and Protestant heretics. From the early 1980s, it entered the stage of inter-religious, "super-ecumenism", praying with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others. In 1989 the MP's Publishing Department slaked the spiritual thirst of the faithful by publishing - the Koran! In 1990 it signed the Chambésy agreement with the Monophysites, removing the anathemas on these so-called "Oriental Orthodox". Chambésy was followed by the Seventh General Assembly of the WCC in Canberra in 1991, in which the Orthodox delegates blasphemed against the Faith still more blatantly. Thus aboriginal pagans invited the participants to pass through a "cleansing cloud of smoke" uniting Aboriginal spirituality to Christian spirituality (!). In spite of this, Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev), head of the Department of External Relations of the MP, said that the WCC was "our common home and we want it to be the cradle of the one church".<sup>274</sup>

On November 13, 1991, "Patriarch" Alexis made his boldest ecumenical step yet when he addressed the Rabbis of New York as follows: "Dear brothers, shalom to you in the name of the God of love and peace!... We are all brothers, for we are all children of the Old Testament on Mount Sinai, which, as we Christians believe, was renewed by Christ... Your law [the Talmud!] is our law, your prophets are our prophets." Here the patriarch openly, in the name of the Orthodox Church, confessed that "we are one with the Jews [!], without renouncing Christianity and not in spite of Christianity, but in the name of and by dint of Christianity, while the Jews are one with us not in spite of Judaism, but in the name of and by dint of true Judaism. We are separated from the Jews because we are not yet completely Christian [!], while the Jews are separated from us because they are not yet completely Jews. For the fullness of Christianity embraces both itself and Judaism, while the fullness of Judaism is Christianity... The Jewish people are near to us in faith. Your law is our law, your prophets are our prophets."

---

<sup>274</sup> *Christian News*, April 1 and 8, 1991; reprinted in "Ecumenism down under", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, vol. XXIV, N 45 (1149), August 5/18, 1991, p. 3; *Keston News Service*, N 370, March 7, 1991, p. 2.

The patriarch called on the Jews to work together with the Christians to build “the new world order” ...<sup>275</sup>

In March, 1992, the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches, including Patriarch Alexis, met in Constantinople and issued a communiqué in which they officially renounced proselytism in the Christian countries of the West (point 4), thereby demonstrating the main consequence of ecumenism for the heretics: a ban on their entry into the Orthodox Church even if they repent! ...

Fr. Nicholas Savchenko has summed up the nature of the MP's immersion in ecumenism as follows: “In an inter-confessional undertaking there are two degrees of participation. One case is participation with the authority of a simple observer, that is, of one who does not enter into the composition, but is only an observer from the side. It is another case when we are talking about fully-entitled membership in an ecumenical organization.

“Unfortunately, at the present time the ROC MP takes part in the activity of the WCC precisely as a fully-entitled member of the Council. It is precisely on this problem that I consider it important to concentrate attention. After all, it is the membership of the ROC MP in the WCC which most of all, willingly or unwillingly, encroaches upon the teaching of the faith itself and therefore continues to remain an obstacle to our [ROCOR's] communion [with the MP]. It is possible to list a series of reasons why membership in the WCC is becoming such an obstacle.

“1. The first important reason consists in the fact that the ROC MP today remains in the composition of the highest leadership of the WCC and takes part in the leadership, planning and financing of the whole of the work of the WCC.

“Official representatives of the ROC MP enter into the Central Committee of the WCC. The Central Committee is the organ of the Council's administration. It defines the politics of the WCC, make official declarations relating to the teaching of the faith and gives moral evaluations of various phenomena of contemporary life within those limites given to it by the church-members. The composition of the last CC of the WCC was elected at the WCC assembly in Harare in 1998. As is witnessed by the official list of the members of the CC of the WCC, five members of the Central Committee come from the MP, headed by Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev). In all there are about 150 people in the CC, including 9 women priests, which we can see from the list of the members of the CC. The last session of the CC of the WCC with the participation of the representatives of the ROC MP took place at the end of August, 2003.

---

<sup>275</sup> *Rech' Patriarkha Aleksea II k rabbinam g. Nyu Yorka (S.Sh.A.) i Eres' Zhidovstvoyushchikh, (The Speech of Patriarch Alexis II to the Rabbis of New York (U.S.A.) and the Heresy of the Judaizers) U.S.A., 1993 (MS, in Russian), Moscow, 1992, pp. 8-10 ®.*

“Besides participating in the CC, the representatives of the MP go into the make-up of the Executive Committee of the WCC, one of whose tasks is the direct leadership of the whole apparatus of the Council and the organization of all its undertakings. There are 24 people in the official list of the members of the Executive Committee of the WCC, including the MP’s representative Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev). Besides him, there are representatives of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, the Romanian Patriarchate and the American Autocephaly in the Executive Committee of the WCC. The last session of the Executive Committee with the participation of representatives of the MP took place at the end of August, 2003. At this last session a new ‘Committee for Prayer’ was formed. It was to occupy itself with the preparation of the text and rite of ecumenical prayers. There are 10 people in all in this committee, including a representative of the MP, Fr. Andrew Eliseev. Besides, the deputy president of the ‘Committee for Prayer’ is a Protestant woman priest. Because of this participation the ROC MP is inevitably responsible for all the decisions of the WCC that contradict the dogmatic and moral teaching of the Orthodox Church.

“2. The second reason for the incompatibility of membership of the WCC with the canons of the Church consists in the fact that the regulations of the Council presuppose the membership in it not of individual person-representatives, but precisely of the whole Local Church in all its fullness. Each Local Church in the WCC is considered in its complete fullness to be a member or a part of the heterodox community.

“In correspondence with the Basis of the WCC, it is a ‘commonwealth of Churches’. In this definition there is a significant difference from the original formulation offered by the commission on ‘Faith and Order’ in 1937, when the future WCC was offered as a ‘community of representatives of the Churches’. The difference is substantial. A community of the Churches themselves is not the same as a community of representatives of the Churches, as we said earlier. In the present case it turns out that the Orthodox Church is considered to be a part of a certain broader commonwealth under the name of the WCC. The legislative documents of the WCC even directly reject any other understanding of membership – after all, if it were not so, the Council would no longer be a Council of churches. And the declaration on entrance into the WCC is given in the name of a church, and not in the name of representatives. In the declaration the church asks that it itself be received into the composition of the WCC. The Council is not a simple association of churches. In the regulatory documents it is asserted that it is a ‘body’ having its own ‘ecclesiological meaning’, as is said about it directly in the heading of the Toronto declaration. The regulatory documents reject only the understanding of the Council as a ‘body’ in separation from the church-members. But in union with the church-members the Council is precisely a ‘body’ with its own ‘ecclesiological meaning’. And this ‘ecclesiological meaning’ of the WCC, by

definition 'cannot be based on any one conception of the Church', as it says in point 3.3 of the Toronto declaration. That is, the Orthodox Church is considered in its fullness to belong to the 'body' with this 'ecclesiological meaning', which in accordance with the constitution cannot be Orthodox.

"Such an understanding of membership in the WCC as the membership of the whole Orthodox Church is contained in the documents on the part of the Local Churches. For example, we can cite the following quotation from the document 'The Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches'. This document was accepted at the session of the inter-Orthodoxy Consultation in 1991 in Chambésy. It says in point 4: 'The Orthodox Churches participate in the life and activity of the WCC only on condition that the WCC is understood as a 'Council of Churches', and not as a council of separate people, groups, movements or religious organizations drawn into the aims and tasks of the WCC...' (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, 1992, № 1, p. 62).

"Such an understanding of the membership of the whole of the Orthodox Church in the WCC was earlier officially confirmed by the Pan-Orthodox Conferences. Thus the Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1968 formulated its relationship with the WCC in the following words: 'To express the common consciousness of the Orthodox Church that it is an organic member of the WCC and her firm decision to bring her contribution to the progress of the whole work of the WCC through all the means at her disposal, theological and other.' (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, 1968, N 7, p. 51). The following, Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference confirmed this formulation in the same sense in the Russian translation. 'The Orthodox Church is a complete and fully-entitled member of the WCC and by all the means at her disposal will aid the development and success of the whole work of the WCC' (*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, 1987, N 7, p. 53). Although these formulations elicited disturbances at the time, nevertheless they have not been changed to the present day, insofar as only the Local Church herself can be a member of the WCC. Any other interpretation of membership is excluded. Either a Local Church is a member or part of the WCC, or it is not.

"From what has been said it turns out that membership in the WCC is not simply observation of the activity of the Council. Membership is precisely becoming a part of the ecumenical commonwealth. The ROC MP must not be a member of the WCC since this signifies becoming a member of the ecumenical movement.

"3. The third reason why membership in the WCC contradicts Orthodoxy is that membership inevitably signifies agreement with the constitutional principles of the WCC and its rules. For example, it says in the Constitution of the WCC (chapter 3) that the Council is created by the church-members to serve the ecumenical movement. Does this mean that the church-members must, or obliged in their fullness, to serve the ecumenical movement? It

appears so. Further the Constitution of the WCC (chapter 3) describes the obligations of those entering the Council of churches in the following words: 'In the search for communion in faith and life, preaching and service, the churches through the Council will... facilitate common service in every place and everywhere and... cultivate ecumenical consciousness'. From these words it follows directly that common preaching with the Protestants is becoming a constitutional obligation of the Orthodox Church. Obligations still more foreign to Orthodoxy are contained in the Rules of the WCC – a separate document that directly regulates the obligations of those entering into the Council of churches. Chapter 2 of the Rules of the WCC is called 'Responsibilities of membership'. The following lines are found in it. 'Membership in the WCC means... devotion to the ecumenical movement as a constitutive element of the mission of the Church. It is presupposed that the church-members of the WCC... encourage ecumenical links and actions at all levels of their ecclesiastical life'. These words of the Rules of the WCC oblige the Orthodox Church to perceive the contemporary ecumenical movement with all its gross heresies and moral vices as a part of the life of the Orthodox Church.

"One more important constitutional document is the declaration 'Towards a common understanding and vision of the WCC'. This document was accepted by the Central Committee of the WCC in 1997 with the participation of representatives of the Local Churches. It also contains views which are incompatible with the Orthodox teaching on the Church. In the first place this concerns how we are to understanding the term that is the cornerstone of the Basis of the WCC, that the Council is a 'commonwealth of Churches'. In paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 the meaning of the term 'commonwealth' is described in the following words: 'The use of the term 'commonwealth' in the Basis really convinces that the Council is more than a simple functional association of churches... We can even say (using the words of the Resolution on ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council) that 'real, albeit incomplete communion (koinonia) exists between them [the churches] already now'. From this quotation it follows directly that the church-members of the WCC are considered as entering into limited ecclesiastical communion with other members of the WCC with all their plagues and heresies. The document 'Towards a common understanding and vision of the WCC' in point 3.5.3 even directly extends this ecclesiastical communion to the whole Orthodox Church with all her people. The document says that this ecclesiastical communion in the Council 'is not something abstract and immobile, it is also not limited by the official links between the leadership of the churches and their leaders or representatives. It is rather a dynamic, mutually acting reality which embraces the whole fullness of the church as the expression of the people of God'.

"The most important document of the WCC having a constitutional significance continues to remain the Toronto declaration – 'The Church, the

churches and the WCC'. On the basis of this document the Local Churches in the 1960s entered into the WCC. In it we also clearly see the principles that radically contradict Orthodoxy. Thus point 4.8 of the Toronto declaration declares: 'The church-members enter into spiritual mutual relationships through which they strive to learn from each other and help each other, so that the Body of Christ may be built and the life of the Church renewed.' Evidently, this principle of the 'building of the Church of Christ' contradicts the Orthodox teaching on the Church. However, it is precisely this, as we see here, that is inscribed in the foundation document of the WCC and can in no way be changed. Besides, the document in its conclusion says the following about the principles of the Toronto declaration, including the principle of the 'building of the Body of Christ': 'Not one of these positive presuppositions which contain in themselves the basis of the World council are in conflict with the teachings of the church-members'.

"From what has been said we can draw the conclusion that membership in the WCC presupposes agreement with its constitutional principles, which contradict Orthodoxy. The ROC MP should not be a member of an organization whose constitutional principles contradict Orthodoxy..."<sup>276</sup>

However, from the 1990s the anti-ecumenist teaching of ROCOR was beginning to make inroads into Russia, and the ecumenical activity of the MP, while continuing without interruption, became less prominent. Thus at the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the WCC in Harare in 1999 the delegation of the MP was merely symbolic. However, at the recent (2006) General Assembly in Porto-Alegri, Brazil, the MP's delegation was again representative. Evidently, the slight slackening in ecumenical activity in the late 1990s, caused mainly by ROCOR's preaching of the truth, has been succeeded by a more confident resumption of this activity now that ROCOR has been neutralized...<sup>277</sup>

Proponents of the ROCOR-MP union have attempted to make much of the Jubilee 2000 Council's document on relations with the heterodox, in which a few concessions were made to the opponents of ecumenism, such as: "the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ, created by our Lord and Saviour Himself; it is the Church established by, and filled with, the Holy Spirit..." "The Church of Christ is one and unique..." "The so-called 'branch theory', which affirms the normality and even the providentiality of the existence of Christianity in the form of separate 'branches'... is completely unacceptable."

---

<sup>276</sup> Savchenko, "Tserkov' v Rossii i 'Vsemirnij Soviet Tserkvej'" (The Church in Russia and the World Council of Churches), *Pravoslavnaia Rus' (Orthodox Russia)*, N 2 (1743), January 15/28, 2004, pp. 10-12.

<sup>277</sup> Igumen Gregory Lourié, "O natsionalizatsii prekrasnogo. Mysli po povodu IX General'noj Asamblei VSTs (On the Nationalization of the Beautiful. Thought on the 9<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the WCC), <http://portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=comment&id=924>.

However, wrote Protopriest Michael Ardov, “the ‘patriarchal liberals’ will also not be upset, insofar as the heretics in the cited document are called ‘heterodox’, while the Monophysite communities are called the ‘Eastern Orthodox Churches’. And the ‘dialogues with the heterodox’ will be continued, and it is suggested that the World Council of Churches be not abandoned, but reformed...”<sup>278</sup>

Although there has been much talk about anti-ecumenism in the MP, as in the Serbian Church, it is significant that only one bishop, Barsanuphius of Vladivostok, voted against the document on relations with the heterodox (six Ukrainian bishops abstained).

The MP’s Fr. (now Bishop) Hilarion (Alfeyev) explained the origins of the document on ecumenism: “The subject of inter-Christian relations has been used by various groups (within the Church) as a bogey in partisan wars. In particular, it has been used to criticise Church leaders who, as is well known, have taken part in ecumenical activities over many years.” In Alfeyev’s opinion, “ecumenism has also been used by breakaway groups, such as the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Old Calendarists, to undermine people’s trust in the Church.” Therefore there was a need “for a clear document outlining the theological basis of the Russian Orthodox Church’s attitude towards heterodoxy, i.e. the question of why we need and whether we need dialogue with the non-Orthodox confessions, and if so which form this dialogue should take.” Alfeyev refused to answer the question whether the Council would discuss the matter of the participation of the MP in the WCC, but said that the patriarchate felt obliged to continue negotiations with Protestant and Catholic representatives in the WCC and to be a part of the ecumenical committee.<sup>279</sup>

After the Council, there was no let-up in the MP’s ecumenical activities. Thus on August 18, 2000, Patriarch Alexis prayed together with the Armenian Patriarch. And on April 21, 2005, he congratulated the new Pope Benedict XVI on his accession, and expressed the hope that he would strive to develop relations between the two churches. When asked how he evaluated Pope John Paul II’s ministry, he replied: “His Holiness’ teachings have not only strengthened Catholics throughout the world in their faith, but also borne witness to Christianity in the complex world of today...”<sup>280</sup>

All this heretical activity falls directly under the anathema against ecumenism hurled by the ROCOR in 1983 and confirmed by it in 1998; and

---

<sup>278</sup> Ardov, *op. cit.*

<sup>279</sup> *Church News*, vol. 12, N 6 (88), July-August, 2000, p. 8. Alfeyev had already shown his ecumenist colours in his book, *The Mystery of Faith* (first published in Moscow in Russian in 1996, in English by Darton, Longman and Todd in 2002), which was strongly criticised from within the MP by Fr. Valentine Asmus.

<sup>280</sup> *Associated Press*, April 21, 2005; *Corriere della Sera*, April 24, 2005.



there is no doubt that if it were to join the MP now, ROCOR would not only fall under the anathemas of the Ecumenical and Pan-Orthodox Councils against a whole series of heresies, but also under its own 1983 anathema...

### Conclusion

We can see from the above that not only have the main conditions posed by ROCOR for union with the MP at the beginning of the 1990s – rejection of Sergianism, glorification of the Holy New Martyrs and rejection of Ecumenism – not been met: they are nowhere near to being met. Even the MP's supposed glorification of the New Martyrs amounts more to their degradation than their glorification, and involves an understanding of martyrdom and the confession of the faith that amounts to a new heresy! By the criteria ROCOR has set herself, and leaving aside other important issues not discussed here (e.g. relations with other True Orthodox Churches, the betrayal of ROCOR members inside Russia who fled to ROCOR from the MP, the extreme moral corruption of the MP hierarchy, the political demands that will be imposed on ROCOR once inside the MP, etc.), ROCOR should *not* join the MP.

“Can two walk together unless they be agreed?” asks the Prophet Amos (3.3). The answer is clearly: *no*; for unity, for the Orthodox Christian, must be founded on unity *in the truth* and on no other basis. If, on the other hand, we mould our understanding of the truth in accordance with our need for some emotional or national or political unity, then we fall into that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of Truth, union with Whom is the whole aim of the Christian life.

If ROCOR does join the MP, she will fall under a whole series of fearsome anathemas: the anathemas against the heretics of the World Council of Churches, including ROCOR's own anathema of 1983; the anathemas against Bolshevism and those who cooperate with it (for there can be no doubt now that Putin's Russia is the successor of the Soviet Union); the anathema against renovationism (of which Sergianism is the heir); the anathemas of the Catacomb Church against the Sergianists; and the anathema against those who “forsake the martyrs of Christ, and turn to false martyrs” (whose crown, undoubtedly, will be the Russian Judas Metropolitan Sergius himself). Nor should the vainglorious thought that ROCOR within the MP can influence it to the better be taken seriously: ROCOR can influence the MP only when she was *outside* it and criticising it from a position of real independence. Once inside, she will simply be the salt that has lost its savour, of which the Lord of the Church said that “it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men” (Matthew 5.13).

*March 18/31, 2006.  
St. Edward the Martyr, King of England.*

(Slightly revised from the version published in *Vernost'*, N 42)

## **22. HOW THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE FELL FROM GRACE**

It was always the Bolsheviks' plan to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church from within. And so in 1922 the first pro-Soviet schism took place – the so-called renovationists or “Living Church”. But the people in their great majority rejected the renovationists, and the Patriarchal Church under Patriarch Tikhon remained unvanquished until the death of the patriarch in April, 1925. Two years later, however, in 1927, the second, “neo-renovationist” schism took place. And this time the official church fell, together with the majority of the people...

### **1. Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa**

After the death of Patriarch Tikhon in April, 1925 (almost certainly by poisoning), and the arrest and imprisonment of the patriarchal locum tenens, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, in December, True Orthodoxy in Russia was without a first-hierarchy living in freedom and able to administer the Church. Metropolitan Peter had appointed deputies in the event of his imprisonment, and by the middle of 1926, one of those deputies, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Nizhni-Novgorod, had established himself as the leading Russian hierarchy in freedom. However, Sergius had fallen away from the Church into renovationism in 1922, and so was suspected by many – the famous Elder Nektary of Optina said that “the poison of renovationism is in him still”. Moreover, he was neither patriarch nor patriarchal locum tenens, but only a deputy of Metropolitan Peter. As such, he did not have the authority to undertake any important steps in Church matters without the express authorization of Metropolitan Peter...

The events that followed the arrest and imprisonment of Metropolitan Peter in December, 1925 are not at all clear. We know that a struggle for power took place between a group of bishops led by Archbishop Gregory (Yatskovsky) of Yekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk), on the one hand, and Metropolitan Sergius of Nizhni-Novgorod (Gorky), on the other, a struggle which Sergius eventually won. It is usually considered that the Grigorianists were the agents of the atheist authorities, whose plot was foiled by Sergius, and this may well have been the case. However, it may be closer to the truth to say that the authorities were playing the two groups off against each other, and would have been happy with either outcome provided it gave them a more malleable church leader than Metropolitan Peter.

According to the more generally accepted version of events, on December 14, although unable to leave Nizhni-Novgorod at the time, Metropolitan Sergius, without consulting with any other senior bishop, announced that he was taking upon himself the rights and duties of the deputy of the Patriarchal locum tenens. However, he was prevented by the OGPU from coming to Moscow, many bishops refused to recognize him (for example, Archbishop Andrew of Ufa), and on December 22, 1925, a group of nine bishops led by Archbishop Gregory gathered at the Donskoy monastery.

The Grigorians, as they came to be called, gave a brief description of the succession of first-hierarchical power since 1917, and then declared concerning Metropolitan Peter: "It was not pleasing to the Lord to bless the labours of this hierarch. During his rule disorders and woes only deepened in the Holy Church... In view of this we... have decided to elect a Higher Temporary Church Council for the carrying out of the everyday affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and for the preparation of a canonically correct Council... Moreover, we have firmly decided not to enter into any relationship or communion with the renovationists and renovationism in all its forms... Instead, we consider it our duty to witness to our complete legal obedience to the powers that be of the Government of the USSR and our faith in its good will and the purity of its intentions in serving the good of the people. We in turn ask them to believe in our loyalty and readiness to serve the good of the same people..." These words clearly revealed the pro-Soviet inspiration of the group. The next day they sought legalisation from the GPU, and ten days later, on January 2, 1926, they received it. On January 7, *Izvestia* published an interview with Archbishop Gregory thanking the authorities.

On January 14, Metropolitan Sergius wrote to Archbishop Gregory demanding an explanation for his usurpation of power. Gregory replied on January 22, saying that while they recognized the rights of the three *locum tenentes*, "we know no conciliar decision concerning you, and we do not consider the transfer of administration and power by personal letter to correspond to the spirit and letter of the holy canons." This was a valid point which was later to be made by several catacomb bishops. But Sergius wrote again on January 29, impeaching Gregory and his fellow bishops, banning them from serving and declaring all their ordinations, appointments, awards, etc., since December 22 to be invalid.

It was a moot question whether Sergius had the power to act in this way. On February 26, Archbishop Hilarion of Verey wrote to Sergius from prison: "The temporary ecclesiastical organ must unite, and not divide the episcopate, it is not a judge or punisher of dissidents – that will be the Council." However, on March 18 Sergius wrote to Metropolitan Peter attempting to justify his "rights" as "first bishop", able to ban bishops even before the Council. And he gave the similar actions of Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Peter himself as precedents. But here he "forgot", as he was to "forget" again later, that his own position was much weaker than that of the Patriarch or Metropolitan Peter, each of whom were recognized in their time by the majority of the episcopate as the true head of the Russian Church.

On January 29, three Grigorian bishops wrote to Metropolitan Peter claiming that they had not known, in their December meeting, that he had transferred his rights to Sergius, and asking him to bless their administration. The free access the Grigorians had to Peter during this period, and the fact that Sergius was at first prevented from coming to Moscow, suggests that the GPU, while not opposing

Sergius, at first favoured the Gregorians as their best hope for dividing the Church.

On February 1 the Grigorians obtained an interview with Metropolitan Peter in prison, in which they asked him to annul Sergius' rights as his deputy and, in view of Sergius' inability to come to Moscow from Nizhni and the refusal of the other deputies, Michael of Kiev and Joseph of Rostov, to accept the deputyship, to hand over the administration of the Church to them. Fearing anarchy in the Church, Metropolitan Peter went part of the way to blessing the Grigorians' undertaking. However, instead of the Grigorian Synod, he created a temporary "college" to administer the Church's everyday affairs consisting of Archbishop Gregory, Archbishop Nicholas (Dobronravov) of Vladimir and Archbishop Demetrius (Belikov) of Tomsk, who were well-known for their firmness.

The Grigorians and Tuchkov, who was present at the meeting, were silent about the fact that Nicholas was in prison and that Demetrius could not come to Moscow. This conspiracy of silence again suggests that they were in league with each other.

Tuchkov proceeded to a further deception: he agreed to summon Demetrius from Tomsk, and even showed Peter the telegram – but never sent it. When Peter, feeling something was wrong, asked for the inclusion of Metropolitan Arsenius (Stadnitsky) in the college of bishops, Tuchkov again agreed and promised to sign Peter's telegram to him. Again, the telegram was not sent.

It has been argued by Lev Regelson that Metropolitan Peter's action in appointing deputies was not canonical, and created misunderstandings that were to be ruthlessly exploited later by Metropolitan Sergius. A chief hierarch does not have the right to transfer the fullness of his power to another hierarch as if it were a personal inheritance: only a Council representing the whole Local Church can elect a leader to replace him. Patriarch Tikhon's appointment of three locum tenentes was an exceptional measure, but one which was nevertheless entrusted to him by – and therefore could claim the authority of – the Council of 1917-18. However, the Council made no provision for what might happen in the event of the death or removal of these three. In such an event, therefore, patriarchal authority ceased, temporarily, in the Church; and there was no canonical alternative, until the convocation of another Council, but for each bishop to govern his diocese independently while maintaining links with neighbouring dioceses, in accordance with the Patriarch's ukaz no. 362 of November 7/20, 1920.

In defence of Metropolitan Peter it may be said that it is unlikely that he intended to transfer the fullness of his power, but only the day-to-day running of the administrative machine. In fact he explicitly said this later, in a letter to Sergius of January 2, 1930. Moreover, in his declaration of December 6, 1925, he had given instructions that in the event of his arrest "the raising of my name, as patriarchal locum tenens, remains obligatory during Divine services." This was

something that Patriarch Tikhon had not insisted upon when he transferred the fullness of his power to Metropolitan Agathangelus in 1922. It suggests that Metropolitan Peter did not exclude the possibility that his deputy might attempt to seize power from him just as the renovationists had seized power from the patriarch and his locum tenens in 1922, and was taking precautions against just such a possibility.

The critical distinction here is that whereas the patriarchal locum tenens has, de jure, all the power of a canonically elected Patriarch and need relinquish his power only to a canonically convoked Council of the whole local Church, the deputy of the locum tenens has no such fullness of power and must relinquish such rights as he has at any time that the Council or the locum tenens requires it. Nevertheless, the important question remains: why did Metropolitan Peter not invoke ukaz no. 362 and announce the decentralization of the Church's administration at the time of his arrest? Probably for two important reasons:

(1) The restoration of the patriarchate was one of the main achievements of the Moscow Council of 1917-18, and had proved enormously popular. Its dissolution might well have dealt a major psychological blow to the masses, who were not always educated enough to understand that the Church could continue to exist either in a centralized (though not papist) form, as it had in the East from 312 to 1917, or in a decentralized form, as in the catacombal period before Constantine the Great and during the iconoclast persecution of the eighth and ninth centuries.

(2) The renovationists – still the major threat to the Church in Metropolitan Peter's eyes – did not have a patriarch, and their organization was, as we have seen, closer to the synodical, state-dependent structure of the pre-revolutionary Church. The presence or absence of a patriarch or his substitute was therefore a major sign of the difference between the true Church and the false for the uneducated believer.

There is another important factor which should be mentioned here. Under the rules imposed upon the Church administration by Peter the Great in the eighteenth century, the Ruling Synod was permitted to move bishops from one see to another, and even to retire, ban or defrock them, in a purely administrative manner. This was contrary to the Holy Canons of the Church, which envisage the defrocking of a bishop only as a result of a full canonical trial, to which the accused bishop is invited to attend three times. Peter's rules made the administration of the Church similar to that of a government department – which is precisely what the Church was according to his Reglament. It enabled the State to exert pressure on the Church to move and remove bishops in the speediest and most efficient manner, without the checks and balances – and delays – that following the Holy Canons would have involved. This was bad enough in itself, even when the State was kindly disposed towards the Church. It was catastrophic when the State became the enemy of the Church after 1917... Now Patriarch

Tikhon, while not rescinding Peter's rules, had opposed the pressure of the State, on the one hand, and had preserved the spirit of sobornost', or conciliarity, on the other, consulting his fellow bishops and the people as far as possible. But the danger remained that if the leadership of the Church were assumed by a less holy man, then the combination of the uncanonical, Petrine government, on the one hand, and an increase of pressure from the State, on the other, would lead to disaster...

## 2. The Rise of Metropolitan Sergius

On February 4, 1926, Metropolitan Peter fell ill and was admitted to the prison hospital. A war for control of the Church now developed between the Grigorians and Metropolitan Sergius. The Grigorians pointed to Sergius' links with Rasputin and the "Living Church": "On recognizing the Living Church, Metropolitan Sergius took part in the sessions of the HCA, recognized the lawfulness of married bishops and twice-married priests, and blessed this lawlessness. Besides, Metropolitan Sergius sympathized with the living church council of 1923, did not object against its decisions, and therefore confessed our All-Russian Archpastor and father, his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, to be 'an apostate from the true ordinances of Christ and a betrayer of the Church', depriving him of his patriarchal rank and monastic calling. True, Metropolitan Sergius later repented of these terrible crimes and was forgiven by the Church, but that does not mean that he should stand at the head of the Church's administration."

All this was true; but these arguments were not strong enough to maintain the Grigorians' position, which deteriorated as several bishops declared their support for Sergius. In particular, Archbishop Hilarion of Verey, who had been released from prison for talks with the GPU, refused to recognise the Grigorians – for which he received an extension of his sentence. Another bishop who strongly rejected the Grigorians was Basil of Priluki.

Yaroslavsky, Tuchkov and the OGPU had already succeeded in creating a schism between Metropolitan Sergius and the Grigorians. They now tried to fan the flames of schism still higher by releasing Metropolitan Agathangelus, the second candidate for the post of patriarchal locum tenens, from exile and persuading him to declare his assumption of the post of locum tenens, which he did officially from Perm on April 18. They also decided, at a meeting in the Kremlin on April 24, to "strengthen the third Tikhonite hierarchy – the Temporary Higher Ecclesiastical Council headed by Archbishop Gregory, as an independent unit."

On April 22, Metropolitan Sergius wrote to Metropolitan Peter at the Moscow GPU, as a result of which Peter withdrew his support from the Grigorians, signing his letter to Sergius: "the penitent Peter". It would be interesting to know whether Sergius knew of Metropolitan Agathangelus' declaration four days earlier when he wrote to Peter. Hieromonk Damascene (Orlovsky) claims that Agathangelus did not tell Sergius until several days later. But the evidence is

ambiguous; for Gubonin gives two different dates for the letter from Agathangelus to Sergius telling the latter of his assumption of the rights of the patriarchal locum tenens: April 18 and 25. If the later date is correct, then Sergius cannot be accused of hiding this critical information from Metropolitan Peter. If, however, the earlier date is correct, then Sergius already knew of Agathangelus' assumption of the rights of locum tenens, and his keeping quiet about this very important fact in his letter to Metropolitan Peter was highly suspicious. For he must have realized that Metropolitan Agathangelus, having returned from exile (he actually arrived in his see of Yaroslavl on April 27), had every right to assume power as the eldest hierarch and the only patriarchal locum tenens named by Patriarch Tikhon who was in freedom at that time. In view of the very ruthless behaviour now displayed by Metropolitan Sergius, it seems likely that he deliberately decided to hide the information about Metropolitan Agathangelus' return from Metropolitan Peter.

In fact, with the appearance of Metropolitan Agathangelus the claims of *both* the Grigorians *and* Sergius to supreme power in the Church collapsed. But Sergius, having tasted of power, was not about to relinquish it so quickly; and just as Metropolitan Agathangelus' rights as locum tenens were swept aside by the renovationists in 1922, so now the same hierarch was swept aside again by the former renovationist Sergius. The chronology of events reveals how the leadership of the Russian Church was usurped for the second time...

On April 30, Sergius wrote to Agathangelus rejecting his claim to the rights of the patriarchal locum tenens on the grounds that Peter had not resigned his post. In this letter Sergius claims that he and Peter had exchanged opinions on Agathangelus' letter in Moscow on April 22 – but neither Sergius nor Peter mention Agathangelus in the letters they exchanged on that day and which are published by Gubonin. Therefore it seems probable that Peter's decision not to resign his post was based on ignorance of Agathangelus' appearance on the scene. Indeed, there can be little doubt that if he had known he would have immediately handed over the administration of the Church to Agathangelus.

On May 13, Agathangelus met Sergius in Moscow, where, according to Sergius, they agreed that if Peter's trial (for unlawfully handing over his authority to the Grigorians) ended in his condemnation, Sergius would hand over his authority to Agathangelus. However, Sergius was simply playing for time, in order to win as many bishops as possible to his side. And on May 16, he again wrote to Agathangelus, in effect reneging on his agreement of three days before: "If the affair ends with Metropolitan Peter being acquitted or freed, I will hand over to *him* my authority, while your eminence will then have to conduct discussions with Metropolitan Peter himself. But if the affair ends with his condemnation, you will be given the opportunity to take upon yourself the initiative of raising the question of bringing Metropolitan Peter to a church trial. When Metropolitan Peter will be given over to a trial, you can present your rights, as the eldest [hierarch] to the post of Deputy of Metropolitan Peter, and when the court will



declare the latter deprived of his post, you will be the second candidate to the locum tenancy of the patriarchal throne after Metropolitan Cyril."

In other words, Sergius in a cunning and complicated way rejected Agathangelus' claim to be the lawful head of the Russian Church, although this claim was now stronger than Metropolitan Peter's (because he was in prison and unable to rule the Church) and *much* stronger than Sergius'.

On May 20, Agathangelus sent a telegram to Sergius: "You promised to send a project to the Bishops concerning the transfer to me of the authorizations of ecclesiastical power. Be so kind as to hurry up." On the same day Sergius replied: "Having checked your information, I am convinced that you have no rights; [I will send you] the details by letter. I ardently beseech you: do not take the decisive step." On May 21, Agathangelus sent another telegram threatening to publish the agreement he had made with Sergius and which he, Sergius, had broken. On May 22, Sergius wrote to Peter warning him not to recognize Agathangelus' claims (the letter, according to Hieromonk Damascene (Orlovsky), was delivered personally by Tuchkov, which shows which side the OGPU was on!). However, Peter ignored Sergius' warning and wrote to Agathangelus on May 22 (and again on May 23), congratulating him on his assumption of the rights of patriarchal locum tenens and assuring him of his loyalty.

At this point Sergius' last real canonical grounds for holding on to power – the support of Metropolitan Peter – collapsed. But Agathangelus only received this letter on May 31, a (OGPU-engineered?) delay that proved to be decisive for the fortunes of the Russian Church. For on May 24, after Sergius had again written rejecting Agathangelus' claims, the latter wrote: "Continue to rule the Church... For the sake of the peace of the Church I propose to resign the office of locum tenens." On the same day Sergius, savagely pressing home his advantage, wrote to the administration of the Moscow diocese demanding that Agathangelus be tried by the hierarchs then in Moscow. When Agathangelus eventually received Peter's letter (which was confirmed by a third one dated June 9), he wrote to Sergius saying that he would send him a copy of the original and informing him that he had accepted the chancellery of the patriarchal locum tenens. And he asked him to come to Moscow so that he could take over power from him. But it was too late; Sergius was already in control of the Church's administration and refused to come to Moscow saying that he had signed a promise not to leave Nizhni-Novgorod (although he had gone to Moscow only two weeks before!). And on May 30 / June 12, in a letter to Metropolitan Peter, Agathangelus finally renounced all claims to the locum tenancy.

Why did Metropolitan Agathangelus renounce the post of locum tenens at this point? The reason he gave to Sergius was his poor health; but some further light is shed on this question by Schema-Bishop Peter (Ladygin), who wrote that when Metropolitan Agathangelus returned from exile, "everyone began to come to him. Then Tuchkov with some archimandrite came to Agathangelus and began to

demand from him that he hand over his administration to Sergius. Metropolitan Agathangelus did not agree to this. Then Tuchkov told him that he would now go back into exile. Then Agathangelus, because of his health and since he had already been three years in exile, resigned from the administration [the post of locum tenens] and left it to Peter of Krutitsa as the lawful [locum tenens] until the second candidate, Metropolitan Cyril, should return from exile. I heard about this when I personally went to him in Yaroslavl and he himself explained his situation to me. And he said that the canonical administration was now really in the hands of Cyril, and temporarily, until the return of Cyril, with Metropolitan Peter. He did not recognize Sergius or Gregory..."

Bishop Peter goes on to write: "I asked him: 'What must we do in the future if neither Cyril nor Peter will be around? Who must we then commemorate?' He said: 'There is still the canonical Metropolitan Joseph, formerly of Uglich, who is now in Leningrad. He was appointed by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon as a candidate in case the Patriarch, I, Cyril and Anthony [Khrapovitsky] died.'" Bishop Peter for a time commemorated Metropolitan Agathangelus as locum tenens.

The astonishing extent of Sergius' usurpation of power is revealed in his fifth letter to Agathangelus, dated June 13, in which he refused to submit even to Metropolitan Peter insofar as the latter, "having transferred to me, albeit temporarily, nevertheless in full, the rights and obligations of the locum tenens, and himself being deprived of the possibility of being reliably informed of the state of ecclesiastical affairs, can neither bear responsibility for the course of the latter, nor, a fortiori, meddle in their administration... I cannot look on the instructions of Metropolitan Peter that have come out of prison as other than instructions or, rather, *as the advice of a person without responsibility* [italics mine – V.M.]."

A sergianist source comments on this letter: "It turns out that, once having appointed a deputy for himself, Metropolitan Peter no longer had the right to substitute another for him, whatever he declared. This 'supple' logic, capable of overturning even common sense, witnessed to the fact that Metropolitan Sergius was not going to depart from power under any circumstances."

Sergius also said that Agathangelus was given over to a hierarchical trial for his anticanonical act, for greeting which Metropolitan Peter "himself becomes a participant in it and is also subject to punishment". In other words, Sergius, though only Metropolitan Peter's deputy as locum tenens for as long as the latter recognized him as such, was not only usurping the rights of the full (and not simply deputy) locum tenens, but was also threatening to bring to trial, on the charge of attempting to usurp the locum tenancy, two out of the only three men who could canonically lay claim to the post!

### 3. The Church Decentralized

On June 7, 1926 a group of bishops imprisoned in the former monastery of Solovki in the White Sea issued an epistle that squarely faced up to the problems of Church-State relations: "The signatories of the present declaration are fully aware of how difficult the establishment of mutually reliable relations between the Church and the State in the conditions of present-day actuality are, and they do not consider it possible to be silent about it. It would not be right, it would not correspond to the dignity of the Church, and would therefore be pointless and unpersuasive, if they began to assert that between the Orthodox Church and the State power of the Soviet republics there were no discrepancies of any kind. But this discrepancy does not consist in what political suspicion wishes to see or the slander of the enemies of the Church points to. The Church is not concerned with the redistribution of wealth or in its collectivization, since She has always recognized that to be the right of the State, for whose actions She is not responsible. The Church is not concerned, either, with the political organization of power, for She is loyal with regard to the government of all the countries within whose frontiers She has members. She gets on with all forms of State structure from the eastern despotism of old Turkey to the republics of the North-American States. This discrepancy lies in the irreconcilability of the religious teaching of the Church with materialism, the official philosophy of the Communist Party and of the government of the Soviet republics which is led by it.

"The Church recognizes spiritual principles of existence; Communism rejects them. The Church believes in the living God, the Creator of the world, the Leader of Her life and destinies; Communism denies His existence, believing in the spontaneity of the world's existence and in the absence of rational, ultimate causes of its history. The Church assumes that the purpose of human life is in the heavenly fatherland, even if She lives in conditions of the highest development of material culture and general well-being; Communism refuses to recognize any other purpose of mankind's existence than terrestrial welfare. The ideological differences between the Church and the State descend from the apex of philosophical observations to the region of immediately practical significance, the sphere of ethics, justice and law, which Communism considers the conditional result of class struggle, assessing phenomena in the moral sphere exclusively in terms of utility. The Church preaches love and mercy; Communism - camaraderie and merciless struggle. The Church instils in believers humility, which elevates the person; Communism debases man by pride. The Church preserves chastity of the body and the sacredness of reproduction; Communism sees nothing else in marital relations than the satisfaction of the instincts. The Church sees in religion a life-bearing force which does not only guarantee for men his eternal, foreordained destiny, but also serves as the source of all the greatness of man's creativity, as the basis of his earthly happiness, sanity and welfare; Communism sees religion as opium, inebriating the people and relaxing their energies, as the source of their suffering and poverty. The Church wants to see religion flourish; Communism wants its death. Such a deep contradiction in

the very basis of their Weltanschauungen precludes any intrinsic approximation or reconciliation between the Church and the State, as there cannot be any between affirmation and negation, between yes and no, because the very soul of the Church, the condition of Her existence and the sense of Her being, is that which is categorically denied by Communism.

“The Church cannot attain such an approximation by any compromises or concessions, by any partial changes in Her teaching or reinterpretation of it in the spirit of Communism. Pitiful attempts of this kind were made by the renovationists: one of them declared it his task to instill into the consciousness of believers the idea that Communism is in its essence indistinguishable from Christianity, and that the Communist State strives for the attainment of the same aims as the Gospel, but by its own means, that is, not by the power of religious conviction, but by the path of compulsion. Others recommended a review of Christian dogmatics in such a way that its teaching about the relationship of God to the world would not remind one of the relationship of a monarch to his subjects and would rather correspond to republican conceptions. Yet others demanded the exclusion from the calendar of saints ‘of bourgeois origin’ and their removal from church veneration. These attempts, which were obviously insincere, produced a profound feeling of indignation among believing people.

“The Orthodox Church will never stand upon this unworthy path and will never, either in whole or in part, renounce her teaching of the Faith that has been winnowed through the holiness of past centuries, for one of the eternally shifting moods of society...”

On June 10, Metropolitan Sergius issued an address to the archpastors, pastors and flock of the Russian Church in the same spirit, noting that there were certain irreconcilable differences between the Church and the State. At the same time, however, he argued for the necessity of the Church being legalized by the State: “The lack of free registration for our church government bodies is creating for the hierarchy many practical inconveniences, imparting to its activities a kind of secret and even conspiratorial character, which, in turn, generates all sorts of misunderstandings and suspicion. And he went on: “On receiving the right to a legal existence, we clearly take account of the fact that, together with rights, obligations are also laid upon us in relation to those authorities that give us these rights. And I have now taken upon myself, in the name of the whole of our Orthodox Old-Church hierarchy and flock, to witness before Soviet power to our sincere readiness to be completely law-abiding citizens of the Soviet Union, loyal to its government and decisively setting ourselves apart from all political parties and undertakings directed to the harm of the Union. But let us be sincere to the end. We cannot pass over in silence the contradictions which exist between us Orthodox people and the Bolshevik-Communists who govern our Union. They see their task to be the struggle against God and His authority in the hearts of the people, while we see the significance and aim of our entire existence in the confession of faith in God as well as in the widest dissemination and affirmation

of that faith in the hearts of the people. They accept only the materialistic conception of history, while we believe in Divine Providence, in miracles, etc. Far from promising reconciliation of that which is irreconcilable and from pretending to adapt our Faith to Communism, we will remain from the religious point of view what we are, that is, Old Churchmen or, as they call us, Tikhonites...”

With regard to the émigré bishops, who were, as we have seen, among the most anti-Soviet of the Russian bishops, Metropolitan Sergius kept to the same position as his predecessors, rejecting the possibility of taking any sanctions against them: “We cannot assume punitive functions and apply ecclesiastical punishments for vengeance... To inflict ecclesiastical punishment upon the émigré clergy for their disloyalty to the Soviet Union would be wholly inappropriate and would give unnecessary occasion for people to speak of the Soviet regime compelling us to do so.” A little later some ROCOR bishops asked Metropolitan Sergius to mediate in the dispute between their Synod and Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris, who refused to recognize the Synod’s authority. In his reply of September 12, 1926, Sergius refused “to be a judge in a case of which I know absolutely nothing... And in general, can the Moscow Patriarchate be the leader of the life of Orthodox émigrés?” No, he replied. And he called on the émigré bishops to create a single “central organ of Church administration which would be sufficiently authoritative to resolve all misunderstandings and differences, and which would have the power to cut off all disobedience, without recourse to our support. For grounds will always be found to suspect the authenticity of our instructions.” And again in its letter of April, 1927, Sergius’ Synod said that to govern the Orthodox dioceses which have arisen abroad “from Moscow is in the ecclesiastical sense impossible due to the lack of legal forms of relations with them”, demonstrating in detail that the Moscow Ecclesiastical Authorities were unable to judge the hierarchs abroad because the canons did not permit an ecclesiastical trial for political crimes, and also because it was impossible formally to organize a correct canonical court.”

This letter is important as it constitutes a de facto recognition of ROCOR by the Moscow Patriarchate. That recognition was withdrawn only when ROCOR refused to accept Sergius’ demand, in 1927, that her hierarchs swear loyalty to the Soviet Union...

Now the increasing divisions in the Church required the convening of a Church Council and the election of a lawful patriarch. This was the only possible way to solve the problem according to Orthodox tradition. But the Council had to take place in secret because of the authorities’ obstructionist tactics.

“Such a secret Council,” writes Sergius Shumilo, “took place de facto in 1926 by means of the collection of the signatures... The initiators of this secret election of a patriarch were Bishops Paulinus (Kroshechkin), Cornelius (Sobolev) and Athanasius (Sakharov), who relied on the support of the exiled Solovki bishops. Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) at first refused to support this initiative of

the episcopate. However, the signatures of 25 bishops in support of the carrying out of the election of a patriarch were collected. Besides, this undertaking received the written support of the bishops in exile on Solovki. In such a situation Metropolitan Sergius was forced to submit to the opinion of the majority, although he declined from active support of this conciliar undertaking. As Archbishop Cornelius (Sobolev) witnessed concerning this: 'In my opinion, he [Metropolitan Sergius] was as it were not especially inclined to carry out the matter of the election of Cyril, but the situation and the canons obliged him to do this'.

"In the absence of lawful ecclesiastical power the growing disagreements between Metropolitan Agathangelus, Metropolitan Sergius, Archbishop Gregory and others, the carrying out of a secret Council and election at it of a canonical head of the Russian Church seemed the only exist from the dead-end that had emerged. Bishop Paulinus (Kroshechkin) clarified his actions as follows: 'In view of the worrying situation of the Church it was desirable to begin the matter of the election of a patriarch'... By November, 1926 72 signatures had collected in support of the election of Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan as the all-Russian patriarch.

"However, the conciliar will of the episcopate of the Russian Church was simply not realized in life because of the opposition of Soviet power. During the final phase of the elective process two participants in the secret collection of signatures [messengers of Bishop Paulinus] were unexpectedly arrested. The OGPU now had in its hand almost all the documents of this enterprise that had not been sanctioned by the authorities, including election ballots with the signatures of bishops. The majority of the participants in the secret conciliar election were arrested and cast into prisons or camps. Metropolitan Cyril was also not allowed to execute his duties. On December 21, 1926 he was arrested by the organs of the OGPU and cast into prison for a new term (his term of exile had expired in the autumn of 1926). Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) was also arrested in connection with this affair. However, by contrast with the other hierarchs, he was very quickly released. As it turned out, the OGPU had been informed from the beginning about the secret elections of a patriarch and used this process for fresh repressions against the episcopate. There is an opinion that it was a planned provocation in which Metropolitan Sergius took part. But no confirmation of this version has yet been found..."

On December 8 Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd took over as Peter's deputy, in accordance with the latter's will of one year before. But Joseph was prevented from leaving Yaroslavl by the authorities, so he handed the leadership of the Church to his deputies: Archbishop Cornelius (Sobolev), Archbishop Thaddeus (Uspensky) and Archbishop Seraphim (Samoilovich) of Uglich. On December 29, Metropolitan Joseph was arrested, and on the same day Archbishop Seraphim wrote that he was taking upon himself the duties of the deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens.

In the same month of December, 1926, Tuchkov proposed to Metropolitan Peter, who was in prison in Suzdal, that he renounce his locum tenancy. Peter refused, and then sent a message to everyone through a fellow prisoner that he would “never under any circumstances leave his post and would remain faithful to the Orthodox Church to death itself”.

This was a blow to the Soviets: while continuing to try and persuade Metropolitan Peter – through the well-known methods of torture – to change his mind, they would have to try and find another man to act as the Judas of the Russian Church. Fortunately for them, however, on January 1, 1927, while he was in Perm on his way to exile on the island of Khe in Siberia, Metropolitan Peter confirmed Sergius as his deputy. This suited the Soviets perfectly, because Sergius was well-known even from the pre-revolutionary period for his “leftist” views, and had even been a leader of the pro-Soviet renovationist schism in 1922.

Though he came to regret this decision, Metropolitan Peter was not able to revoke it officially from his remote exile. And the Soviets wasted no time in imprisoning Sergius, so as to remind him, if he needed reminding, who the real powers in the land were... After three months in prison, Sergius emerged in April a devoted servant of the revolution...

While Sergius was in prison, Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich had been managing affairs as *his* deputy. At the beginning of March he was summoned from Uglich to Moscow and interrogated for three days by the GPU. Evidently, they were thinking that if Seraphim might also be useful to them, they might not need Sergius...

But they were mistaken. Seraphim was offered a Synod, and indicated who should be its members. Seraphim rejected this list, and put forward his own list of names, which included Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, probably the most authoritative hierarch in Russia and one of Patriarch Tikhon's three locum tenentes (the others were Metropolitan Agathangel of Yaroslavl and Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa).

“But he's in prison,” they said.

“Then free him,” said the archbishop.

The GPU then presented him with conditions for the legalization of the Church by Soviet power. This would have involved surrendering the Church into the power of the atheists.

Arfed Gustavson writes: “He refused outrightly without entering into discussions, pointing out that he was not entitled to decide such questions without the advice of his imprisoned superiors. When he was asked whom he would appoint as his executive deputy he is said to have answered that he would

turn over the Church to the Lord Himself. The examining magistrate was said to have looked at him full of wonder and to have replied:

“All the others have appointed deputies...”

“To this Seraphim countered: ‘But I lay the Church in the hands of God, our Lord. I am doing this, so that the whole world may know what freedom Orthodox Christianity is enjoying in our free State.’”

Another account of this dialogue was given by Archbishop Seraphim’s senior subdeacon, Michael Nikolaevich Yaroslavsky: “For 100 days Vladyka Seraphim happened to rule the whole of the Russian Orthodox Church. This was in 1926. Metropolitan Sergius was in prison, everybody was in prison...”

“And so, as he had been put in charge, Vladyka told me that at that time the authorities offered him, as the Primate of the Church, a Synod of bishops. He did not agree and immediately received three years in Solovki camp. He did not betray the Church, but... declared the autocephaly of each diocese, since each Church Primate was another candidate for prison...”

This was a decisive moment, for the central hierarch of the Church was effectively declaring the Church’s decentralization. And not before time. For with the imprisonment of the last of the three possible locum tenentes there was really no canonical basis for establishing a central administration for the Church before the convocation of a Local Council. But this was prevented by the communists. As we have seen, the system of deputies of the deputy of the locum tenens had no basis in Canon Law or precedent in the history of the Church. And if it was really the case that the Church could not exist without a first hierarch and central administration, then the awful possibility existed that with the fall of the first hierarch the whole Church would fall, too...

The communists also wanted a centralized administration; so Tuchkov now turned to Metropolitan Agathangel with the proposal that he lead the Church. He refused. Then he turned to Metropolitan Cyril with the same proposal. He, too, refused. The conversation between Tuchkov and Metropolitan Cyril is reported to have gone something like this:-

“If we have to remove some hierarch, will you help us in this?”

“Yes, if the hierarch appears to be guilty of some ecclesiastical transgression... In the contrary case, I shall tell him directly, ‘The authorities are demanding this of me, but I have nothing against you.’”

“No!” replied Tuchkov. “You must try to find an appropriate reason and remove him as if on your own initiative.”



To this the hierarch replied: "Eugene Nikolayevich! You are not the cannon, and I am not the shot, with which you want to blow up our Church from within!"

#### 4. Metropolitan Sergius Forms a Synod

On April 2, 1927 Metropolitan Sergius emerged from prison, ready to be the shot that would blow up the Orthodox Church from within... He was released from prison on condition that he did not leave Moscow – although before his arrest he had not had the right to live in Moscow. However, the investigation of his case was not discontinued, showing that the authorities still wanted to keep him on a leash... Five days later, Archbishop Seraphim handed over to him the government of the Russian Church. And another six days later, on April 13, Metropolitan Sergius announced to Bishop Alexis (Gotovtsev), who was temporary administrator of the Moscow diocese, that he had assumed the post of deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens.

On May 16 Sergius asked the NKVD for permission to hold a preliminary meeting with six or seven hierarchs with a view to inviting them to become members of a Synod and then to petition the government for registration of the Synod. The NKVD immediately agreed, acknowledging receipt of one rouble for the certificate. "Thus a one-rouble certificate inaugurated the history of the legalized Moscow Patriarchate."

On May 18 the meeting took place, and the hierarchs agreed to convert their meeting into a temporary Patriarchal Holy Synod. The members of this Synod, according to Archbishop Seraphim's subdeacon, were precisely those hierarchs that had been suggested to Archbishop Seraphim, but whom he had rejected... As the Catholic writer Deinber points out, "when the names of the bishops invited to join the Synod were made known, then there could be no further doubts concerning the capitulation of Metropolitan Sergius before Soviet power. The following joined the Synod: Archbishop Sylvester (Bratanovsky) – a former renovationist; Archbishop Alexis Simansky – a former renovationist, appointed to the Petrograd see by the Living Church after the execution of Metropolitan Benjamin [Kazansky]; Archbishop Philip [Gumilevsky] – a former beglopopovets, i.e. one who had left the Orthodox Church for the sect of the beglopopovtsi; Metropolitan Seraphim [Alexandrov] of Tver, a man whose connections with the OGPU were known to all Russia and whom no-one trusted..."

On May 20, the OGPU officially recognized this Synod, which suggested that Metropolitan Sergius had agreed to the terms of the legalization of the Church by Soviet power which Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Peter had rejected. One of Sergius' closest supporters, Bishop Metrophanes of Aksaisk, had once declared that "the legalization of the church administration is a sign of heterodoxy"... In any case, on May 25 Metropolitan Sergius and his "Patriarchal Holy Synod" now wrote to the bishops enclosing the OGPU document and telling them that their diocesan councils should now seek registration from the local organs of Soviet

power. Some hierarchs hastened to have their diocesan administrations legalized. But as it turned out, the OGPU was in no hurry to register diocesan councils before their membership had been established to the OGPU's satisfaction...

"In 1929, when the results were already obvious, [the Catacomb] Bishop Damascene (Tsedrik) wrote this in his 'Letter to the Legalized Ones': 'Fathers and brothers! While it is still not too late, do think and look into the essence of the 'legalization' that was graciously granted to you, lest you should later bitterly repent of the mistake that all of you with Metropolitan Sergius at your head are now committing! What you are accepting under the name of 'legalization' is, in essence, an act of bondage that guarantees you no rights whatsoever, while imposing upon you some grievous obligations. It would be naïve to expect anything other than that. The Communist Soviet Power is frank and consistent. It openly declared itself hostile to religion and set the destruction of the Church as its goal. It never stops stating openly and clearly its theomachistic tasks through its top governmental representatives and all of its junior agents. This is why it is very naïve and criminal to believe that the so-called legalization by the Soviets is even partially seeking the good of the Church."

In June, 1927 Sergius wrote to Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris directing him to sign a declaration of loyalty to the Soviet power. He agreed... On July 14, in ukaz № 93, Sergius demanded that all clergy abroad should sign a formal pledge to cease criticizing the Soviet government. It also stated that any clergyman abroad who refused to sign such would no longer be considered to be a part of the Moscow Patriarchate. This ukaz, which completely contradicted his previous ukaz of September 12, 1926, which blessed the hierarchs abroad to form their own independent administration, even included the actual text of the pledge that was to be signed: "I, the undersigned, promise that because of my actual dependence upon the Moscow Patriarchate, I will not permit myself neither in my social activities nor especially in my Church work, any expression that could in the least way be considered as being disloyal with regard to the Soviet government." The clergy abroad were given until October 15 to sign this pledge. The Council of Bishops, in its encyclical dated August 26, 1927, refused this demand and declared: "The free portion of the Church of Russia must terminate relations with the ecclesiastical administration in Moscow [i.e., with Sergius and his synod], in view of the fact that normal relations with it are impossible and because of its enslavement by the atheist regime, which is depriving it of freedom to act according to its own will and of freedom to govern the Church in accordance with the canons."

However, Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris, agreed to sign, "but on condition that the term 'loyalty' means for us the apoliticisation of the émigré Church, that is, we are obliged not to make the ambon a political arena, if this will relieve the difficult situation of our native Mother Church; but we cannot be 'loyal' to Soviet power: we are not citizens of the USSR, and the USSR does not recognise us as such, and therefore the political demand is from the canonical point of view non-

obligatory for us...”

The impossible demands that Sergius’ appeal for loyalty to the Soviet Union placed on hierarchs living outside the Soviet Union was pointed out by the future hieromartyr, Archbishop John of Latvia, to Metropolitan Eleutherius of Lithuania: “As far as I know you, your co-pastors and flock, the question of loyalty to the USSR and the openly antitheist authorities in power there can be resolved sincerely by you only in a negative sense. But if you and your flock were not such as I know you to be, the confession of loyalty to the USSR and the authorities in power there would still be impossible for you from a juridical point of view. And you and your co-pastors and flock are obliged under oath to be faithful citizens of the Lithuanian Republic. Simultaneous fidelity both to Lithuania and the USSR is juridically unthinkable. But even if it were not a question of loyalty in the sense of fidelity to the USSR where the ‘appeal’ [of Metropolitan Sergius] was born, but in the sense of benevolence towards the USSR, then all the same you, as a faithful son of Lithuania, cannot in the future and in all cases promise benevolence towards the USSR...”

On July 5, 1928, the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR decreed: “The present ukaz [of Sergius] introduces nothing new into the position of the Church Abroad. It repeats the same notorious ukaz of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon in 1922, which was decisively rejected by the whole Church Abroad in its time.” In response to this refusal, Metropolitan Sergius expelled the hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad from membership of the Moscow Patriarchate. So the first schism between the Russian Church inside and outside Russia took place as a result of the purely political demands of Sergius’ Moscow Patriarchate.

### 5. The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius

On July 16/29, Metropolitan Sergius issued the infamous Declaration that has been the basis of the existence of the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate ever since, and which was to cause the greatest and most destructive schism in the history of the Orthodox Church since the fall of the Papacy in the eleventh century.

Several points should be noted about this document. First Sergius pretended that Patriarch Tikhon had always been aiming to have the Church legalized by the State, but had been frustrated by the émigré hierarchs and by his own death. There is a limited truth in this – but it was not the émigré hierarchs that frustrated the patriarch, nor did he want the kind of legalization Sergius wanted... Then he went on: “At my proposal and with permission from the State, a blessed Patriarchal Synod has been formed by those whose signatures are affixed to this document at its conclusion. Missing are the Metropolitan of Novgorod, Arsenius, who has not arrived yet, and Archbishop Sebastian of Kostroma, who is ill. Our application that this Synod be permitted to take up the administration of the Orthodox All-Russian Church has been granted. Now our Orthodox Church has not only a canonically legal central administration but a central administration

that is legal also according to the law of the State of the Soviet Union. We hope that this legalization will be gradually extended to the lower administrative units, to the dioceses and the districts. It is hardly necessary to explain the significance and the consequences of this change for our Orthodox Church, her clergy and her ecclesiastical activity. Let us therefore thank the Lord, Who has thus favoured our Church. Let us also give thanks before the whole people to the Soviet Government for its understanding of the religious needs of the Orthodox population. At the same time let us assure the Government that we will not misuse the confidence it has shown us.

“In undertaking now, with the blessings of the Lord, the work of this Synod, we clearly realize the greatness of our task and that of all the representatives of the Church. We must show not only with words but with deeds, that not only people indifferent to the Orthodox Faith or traitors to the Orthodox Church can be loyal citizens of the Soviet Union and loyal subjects of the Soviet power, but also the most zealous supporters of the Orthodox Church, to whom the Church with all her dogmas and traditions, with all her laws and prescriptions, is as dear as Truth and Life.

“We want to be Orthodox, and at the same time to see the Soviet Union as our civil Fatherland, whose triumphs and successes are also our triumphs and successes, whose failures are our failures. Every attack, boycott, public catastrophe or an ordinary case of assassination, as the recent one in Warsaw, will be regarded as an attack against ourselves...”

Protopriest Lev Lebedev comments on this: “This murder in Warsaw was the murder by B. Koverdaya of the Bolshevik Voikoff (also known as Weiner), who was one of the principal organizers of the murder of the Imperial Family, which fact was well known then, in 1927. So Sergius let the Bolsheviks clearly understand that he and his entourage were at one with them in all their evil deeds up to and including regicide.”

Metropolitan Sergius continued: “Even if we remain Orthodox, we shall yet do our duties as citizens of the Soviet Union ‘not only for wrath but also for conscience’s sake’ (Romans 13.5), and we hope that with the help of God and through working together and giving support to one another we shall be able to fulfil this task.

“We can be hindered only by that which hindered the construction of Church life on the bases of loyalty in the first years of Soviet power. This is an inadequate consciousness of the whole seriousness of what has happened in our country. The establishment of Soviet power has seemed to many like some kind of misunderstanding, something coincidental and therefore not long lasting. People have forgotten that there are no coincidences for the Christian and that in what has happened with us, as in all places and at all times, the same right hand of God is acting, that hand which inexorably leads every nation to the end

predetermined for it. To such people who do not want to understand 'the signs of the times', it may also seem that it is wrong to break with the former regime and even with the monarchy, without breaking with Orthodoxy... Only ivory-tower dreamers can think that such an enormous society as our Orthodox Church, with the whole of its organization, can have a peaceful existence in the State while hiding itself from the authorities. Now, when our Patriarchate, fulfilling the will of the reposed Patriarch, has decisively and without turning back stepped on the path of loyalty, the people who think like this have to either break themselves and, leaving their political sympathies at home, offer to the Church only their faith and work with us only in the name of faith, or (if they cannot immediately break themselves) at least not hinder us, and temporarily leave the scene. We are sure that they will again, and very soon, return to work with us, being convinced that only the relationship to the authorities has changed, while faith and Orthodox Christian life remain unshaken... "

An article in *Izvestia* immediately noted the essence of the declaration - a return to renovationism: "The far-sighted part of the clergy set out on this path already in 1922". So "sergianism", as Sergius' position came to be known, was "neo-renovationism", and therefore subject to the same condemnation as the earlier renovationism of "the Living Church" received - *anathema*. As recently as November, 2008 the True Orthodox Church of Russia has defined sergianism as "a neo-renovationist schism".

The radical error of this declaration lay in the idea that, in a state whose aim was the extirpation of all religion, it was possible to preserve loyalty to the State while "faith and Orthodox Christian life remained unshaken". This presupposed that it was possible in the Soviet Union to draw a clear line between politics and religion. But in practice, even more than in theory, this line proved impossible to draw. For the Bolsheviks, there was no such dividing line; for them, *everything* was ideological, everything had to be in accordance with their ideology, there could be no room for disagreement, no private spheres into which the state and its ideology did not pry. Unlike the Roman emperors, who allowed the Christians to order their own lives in their own way so long as they showed loyalty to the state, the Bolsheviks insisted in imposing their own ways upon the Christians in every sphere: in family life (civil marriage only, divorce on demand, children spying on parents), in education (compulsory Marxism), in economics (dekulakization, collectivization), in military service (the oath of allegiance to Lenin), in science (Darwinism, Lysenkoism), in art (socialist realism), and in religion (the requisitioning of valuables, registration, commemoration of the authorities at the Liturgy, reporting of confessions by the priests). Resistance to any one of these demands was counted as "anti-Soviet behaviour", i.e. *political* disloyalty. Therefore it was no use protesting one's political loyalty to the regime if one refused to accept just one of these demands. According to the Soviet interpretation of the word: "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one has become guilty of all of it" (James 2.10), such a person was an *enemy of the people*. Metropolitan Sergius' identification of his and his Church's joys and sorrows

with the joys and sorrows of Soviet communism placed the souls of the millions who followed him in the most serious jeopardy.

The publication of Sergius' Declaration was greeted with a storm of criticism. Its opponents saw in it a more subtle version of renovationism. Even its supporters and neutral commentators from the West recognized that it marked a radical change in the relationship of the Church to the State. thus Professor William Fletcher comments: "This was a profound and important change in the position of the Russian Orthodox Church, one which evoked a storm of protest." According to the Soviet scholar Titov, "after the Patriarchal church changed its relationship to the Soviet State, undertaking a position of loyalty, in the eyes of the believers any substantial difference whatsoever between the Orthodox Church and the renovationists disappeared." According to Snychev, quoting from a renovationist source, in some dioceses in the Urals up to 90% of parishes sent back Sergius' declaration as a sign of protest." Again, Donald Rayfield wrote that Sergius "formally surrendered the Orthodox Church to the Bolshevik party and state."

On September 14/27, the bishops imprisoned on Solovki issued a statement, denouncing Sergius' Declaration: "The subjection of the Church to the State's decrees is expressed [in Sergius' declaration] in such a categorical and sweeping form that it could easily be understood in the sense of a complete entanglement of Church and State... The Church cannot declare all the triumphs and successes of the State to be Her own triumphs and successes. Every government can occasionally make unwarranted, unjust and cruel decisions which become obligatory to the Church by way of coercion, but which the Church cannot rejoice in or approve of. One of the tasks of the present government is the elimination of all religion. The government's successes in this direction cannot be recognized by the Church as Her own successes... The epistle renders to the government 'thanks before the whole people to the Soviet government for its understanding of the religious needs of the Orthodox population'. An expression of gratitude of such a kind on the lips of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church cannot be sincere and therefore does not correspond to the dignity of the Church... The epistle of the patriarchate sweepingly accepts the official version and lays all the blame for the grievous clashes between the Church and the State on the Church..."

"In 1926 Metropolitan Sergius said that he saw himself only as a temporary deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens and in this capacity as not empowered to address pastoral messages to the entire Russian Church. If then he thought himself empowered only to issue circular letters, why has he changed his mind now? The pastoral message of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod leads the Church into a pact with the State. It was considered as such by its authors as well as by the government. Sergius' action resembles the political activities of the 'Living Church' and differs from them not in nature but only in form and scope..."

The Solovki bishops affirmed the civic loyalty of the Orthodox Church to the Soviet State. But, as M.B. Danilushkin points out, “the tone of these affirmations was fundamentally different than in the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius. Recognizing necessity – mainly the inevitability of civil submission to the authorities – they decisively protested against the unceremonious interference of the authorities into the inner affairs of the Church, the ban on missionary activity and the religious education of children, firmly expressing their position that in this sphere there could be no compromise on the part of the Church. Although the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius recognized the religious persecutions in the USSR, it called, not the state, but the believers, to peace. In this consists the fundamental difference between the two documents...”

According to different sources, 17 or 20 or 26 bishops signed this epistle. However, the majority of the bishops on Solovki did not consider Sergius’ declaration a reason for breaking communion with him. Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan wrote to an unknown person that the Solovki bishops wanted to wait for the repentance of Sergius “until the convening of a canonical Council... in the assurance that the Council could not fail to demand that of him”.

#### **6. The Birth of the Catacomb Church**

Although the church revolution engineered by Metropolitan Sergius and supported by the Soviets was conceived and first brought to fruition in the centre, in Moscow, it could not hope to succeed on a large scale if it did not also triumph in the other capital of Russian life, Petrograd – or Leningrad, as the communists now called it. The revolutionaries must have had good hopes of succeeding also in Petrograd. After all, it had been the birthplace of the political revolution in 1917, and had also been pivotal in the renovationists’ church revolution in 1922-23. But by the Providence of God it was precisely in revolutionary Petrograd that the fight-back began. Let us go back a little in time to see how this came to pass.

By the end of 1925 the Episcopal council of vicar-bishops that had ruled the Petrograd diocese since the martyric death of Metropolitan Benjamin in 1922 ceased its existence when three bishops were arrested: Benedict (Plotnikov), Innocent (Tikhonov) and Seraphim (Protopopov). There remained only Bishop Gregory (Lebedev). Also in the city were Bishop Sergius (Druzhinin) and Bishop Demetrius (Lyubimov). These three were all thoroughly Orthodox bishops, who would lead the Catacomb Church after 1927 and suffer martyric deaths. However, in the spring of 1926 there returned from exile two Petrograd vicar-bishops, Nicholas (Yarushevich) and Alexis (Simansky). Alexis “hurried to Moscow to Metropolitan Sergius, and found with him, who was also a former renovationist, complete mutual understanding. From Moscow Alexis returned [to Petrograd] with a resolution on the freeing of Bishop Gregory (Lebedev) of Schlisselburg from administration of the Leningrad diocese and on the appointment of Alexis himself as temporary administrator. He began to serve in the cathedral church of the Resurrection-on-the-Blood. However, the people distrusted him, while the

majority of clergy began to oppose him, according to the witness of Protopriest Michael Cheltsov, who was the first who definitely and categorically expressed himself against Alexis, 'not having the strength or right to recognize him for his very great sin against the Church and Metropolitan Benjamin and for his huge service to renovationism'."

Bishops Alexis and Nicholas, together with a group of clergy led by Protopriest Nicholas Chukov, who became Metropolitan Gregory of Leningrad after the war, now represented the neo-renovationist tendency in the city who wanted to improve relations with the Soviets and get the Church legalized by them.

Fr. Michael Cheltsov describes the incipient schism between these two groups of bishops: "Alexis, led by the group of Fr. Chukov and co., decided to push through the matter of negotiations with Soviet power over legalization through the common participation of all the bishops and even through a decision by the bishops alone. Gregory gave no reply to his invitation and did not go. Demetrius at first suggested going, and Gregory advised him to go. Sergius of Narva, flattered by this for him unexpected beckoning into the midst of the bishops, was staying with me and Bishop Demetrius and on our joint advice was at the meeting. The three bishops did not constitute an assembly. Alexis and Nicholas, who were both sympathetic to legalization and wanted it fervently, could not consider Sergius as their equal, and therefore without the other two considered that the meeting had not taken place. Sergius also spoke about the necessity of a meeting of all the bishops, but introduced the desire to bring to this meeting some of the city protopriests. The meeting ended with nothing. But for the two bishops – Alexis and Demetrius – it was clear that Gregory and Demetrius were not with them, but against them."

"Two groups became clearly delineated: Alexis and Nicholas, and Gregory and Demetrius. Sergius, in view of his closeness to [Protopriest Basil] Veriuzhsky [rector of the zealot Cathedral of the Resurrection "on the Blood"] and to me, also joined the group of Gregory..."

In August, 1926 Bishop Alexis was transferred to the see of Novgorod, and Archbishop Joseph (Petrovykh) of Petrograd was appointed Metropolitan of Petrograd. This appointment was greeted with great joy by the faithful. However, the Soviets refused Joseph permission to stay in Petrograd - he served there only once, on September 12, the feast of St. Alexander Nevsky, and never returned to the city again. In the meantime, he appointed the little-known Bishop Gabriel (Voyevodin) as his deputy.

Meanwhile, Bishop Alexis received permission from the Soviets to stay in Petrograd and began to serve in the churches of his friends in the city. This was opposed by Bishops Gregory and Demetrius, who obtained from Metropolitan Joseph that bishops from other sees (i.e. Alexis) should not be allowed to serve in



the city without the permission of Bishop Gabriel. But "Alexis, raised by Metropolitan Sergius to the rank of archbishop, paid no attention to this decree and continued to serve in the churches of the city, without abandoning his intrigues against the persecuted hierarch [Metropolitan Joseph]. The clergy were upset, and there were rumours that Vladyka Joseph would not be coming back and that bishop Alexis would soon be appointed the ruling bishop in the rank of metropolitan."

At the beginning of the Great Fast, 1927 Bishops Gregory and Gabriel were arrested and cast into prison. Since Metropolitan Joseph was still in exile in Ustiuzhna, Bishop Nicholas began to administer the diocese as being the senior bishop by ordination, and in April received official permission to do this from Metropolitan Sergius in Moscow. On his return to Petrograd, Bishop Nicholas began to act authoritatively and brusquely towards his fellow hierarchs, and in August he obtained the forcible retirement of Bishop Sergius from his see.

The previous month Metropolitan Sergius' Declaration had been published, and Bishop Nicholas tried to get it distributed and read out in church. However, there was widespread resistance to this. When Fr. Nicholas Chukov read it out, there was a great commotion in the church. And when one of the deans, the future Hieromartyr Fr. Sergius Tikhomirov, received it, he immediately sent it back to Nicholas and resigned his deanery. "Whether the epistle was read out somewhere or not," writes Fr. Michael Cheltsov, "the mood among the Peterites against Metropolitan Sergius and to a significant extent against our Nicholas was sharply negative. Their Orthodoxy, especially of the former, was subjected to powerful doubt, and trust in them was undermined. Our clergy, if they read the epistle, were all against it."

However, it was not the Declaration so much as the actions undertaken by Metropolitan Sergius against Metropolitan Joseph that stirred the Petrograd flock into action. On September 17, 1927, Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod, probably acting under pressure from the authorities, transferred Metropolitan Joseph from Petrograd to Odessa. On September 28, Metropolitan Joseph wrote to Sergius that he refused to accept it, saying that he saw in it "an evil intrigue by a clique which did not want him to be in Leningrad". Then he wrote to Tuchkov asking that he be allowed to administer the Leningrad diocese. Finally he wrote to Sergius again rebuking him and his Synod for "a woefully servile obedience to a principle alien to the Church". He said that he regarded his transfer to the Odessa see as "anti-canonical, ill-advised and pleasing to an evil intrigue in which I will have no part". Or, as he put it in 1930: "Summoned for this reason to Moscow, and learning that the transfer was elicited by intrigues on the part of individual members of the clergy, I declared that I found the ban for these reasons to be unlawful".

On October 21, Sergius directed all the clergy in Russia to commemorate the Soviet authorities, and not the bishops who were in exile. This measure greatly

increased the anxiety of the faithful. The commemoration of the Soviet authorities was seen by many as the boundary beyond which the Church would fall away from Orthodoxy. And the refusal to commemorate the exiled hierarchs implied that the hierarchs themselves were not Orthodox and constituted a break with the tradition of commemorating exiled hierarchs that extended back to the time of the Roman catacombs. Sergius was in effect cutting the faithful off from their canonical hierarchs.

One of the leaders of the opposition, the future martyr and possibly bishop, Mark Novoselov, saw in these events the third step in the revolution's destruction of the Church. The first step was the revolution's depriving the Church of Her civil protector, the Orthodox Christian Emperor in 1917, "thereby doubling the significance of the pastors". The second step was its depriving the Church of the possibility of convening Councils, by which it "increased their [the pastors'] significance tenfold, since it made every bishop the real guardian of Orthodoxy in his province". The third step took place in 1927, when "under the form of the gift of legalization the Church was deprived of this Her head," which increased the significance of the true pastors still more.

Sergius' act of October 21 "depersonalized" the Liturgy, according to Mark, by "1) casting into the shade the person of Metropolitan Peter through (a) ceasing to commemorate him as 'our Lord' and (b) placing the name of Metropolitan Sergius next to it, that is, two names in one patriarchal place, which is both contrary to the spirit of the canons and deprives the name of the head of the Russian Church - and the personal name of Metropolitan Peter - of its very symbolical meaning; 2) introducing the commemoration of the impersonal name of the authorities, ... and 3) casting into oblivion the names and persons who shone out in their confessing exploit."

Hieromartyr Mark pointed out that, while transfers of bishops took place frequently in tsarist Russia, those were in the context of a single Church family, when Russia was as it were "one diocese". But the transfers in Soviet times were far more dangerous; for when the people were deprived of their confessing bishop, whom they knew and loved, there was no guarantee that his replacement - if there was a replacement - would be Orthodox.

On October 25, Bishop Nicholas (Yarushevich) proclaimed in the cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Petrograd the decision of the Provisional Synod to transfer Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) from Petrograd to Odessa (the secular authorities had already forbidden Metropolitan Joseph to return to the city). In the same decision Bishops Demetrius and Seraphim were forbidden to leave the diocese "without the knowledge and blessing" of Bishop Nicholas (Yarushevich). This caused major disturbances in Petrograd. However, Metropolitan Sergius paid no attention to the disturbances in Petrograd. Taking upon himself the administration of the diocese, he sent in his place Bishop Alexis (Simansky). So already, only three months after the declaration, the new revolutionary cadres

were being put in place... Then, on October 31, Archimandrite Sergius (Zenkevich) was consecrated Bishop of Detskoe Selo, although the canonical bishop, Gregory (Lebedev), was still alive but languishing in a GPU prison. From that moment many parishioners stopped going to churches where Metropolitan Sergius' name was commemorated, and Bishop Nicholas was not invited to serve.

On October 30 Metropolitan Joseph wrote to Sergius: "You made me metropolitan of Leningrad without the slightest striving for it on my part. It was not without disturbance and distress that I accepted this dangerous obedience, which others, perhaps wisely (otherwise it would have been criminal) decisively declined... Vladyko! Your firmness is yet able to correct everything and urgently put an end to every disturbance and indeterminateness. It is true, I am not free and cannot now serve my flock, but after all everybody understands this 'secret'... Now anyone who is to any degree firm and needed is unfree (and will hardly be free in the future)... You say: this is what the authorities want; they are giving back their freedom to exiled hierarchs on the condition that they change their former place of serving and residence. But what sense or benefit can we derive from the leap-frogging and shuffling of hierarchs that this has elicited, when according to the spirit of the Church canons they are in an indissoluble union with their flock as with a bride? Would it not be better to say: let it be, this false human mercy, which is simply a mockery of our human dignity, which strives for a cheap effect, a spectre of clemency. Let it be as it was before; it will be better like that. Somehow we'll get to the time when they finally understand that the eternal, universal Truth cannot be conquered by exiles and vain torments... One compromise might be permissible in the given case... Let them (the hierarchs) settle in other places as temporarily governing them, but let them unfailingly retain their former title... I cannot be reconciled in my conscience with any other scheme, I am absolutely unable to recognize as correct my disgustingly tsarist-rasputinite transfer to the Odessa diocese, which took place without any fault on my part or any agreement of mine, and even without my knowledge. And I demand that my case be immediately transferred from the competence of your Synod, in whose competence I am not the only one to doubt, for discussion by a larger Council of bishops, to which alone I consider myself bound to display unquestioning obedience."

On December 12, the Petrograd Christians sent a delegation led by Bishop Demetrius and representing eight Petrograd bishops, clergy and academics to Moscow to meet Sergius. Here the conversation centred, not on Sergius' canonical transgressions, but on the central issue of his relationship to Soviet power. At one point Sergius said: "By my new church policy I am saving the Church." To which Archpriest Victorinus Dobronravov replied: "The Church does not have need of salvation; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. You, yourself, Vladyka, have need of salvation through the Church."

On December 15 Tuchkov, having received a secret report from Leningrad on this meeting with Sergius, wrote the following in his own handwriting: "To

Comrade Polyansky. 1. Tell Leningrad that Sergius had a delegation with such-and-such suggestions. 2. Suggest that the most active laymen be arrested under some other pretences. 3. Tell them that we will influence Sergius that he ban certain of the oppositional bishops from serving, and let Yarushevich then ban some of the priests."

After further delegations and dialogues in this vein, Bishops Demetrius of Gdov and Sergius of Narva separated from Sergius on December 26: "for the sake of the peace of our conscience we reject the person and the works of our former leader [predstoiatelia – Sergius was meant], who has unlawfully and beyond measure exceeded his rights". This was approved by Metropolitan Joseph (who had been prevented from coming to Petrograd) on January 7.

In a letter to a Soviet archimandrite, Metropolitan Joseph rejected the charge of being a schismatic and accused Sergius of being a schismatic. He went on: "The defenders of Sergius say that the canons allow one to separate oneself from a bishop only for heresy which has been condemned by a Council. Against this one may reply that the deeds of Metropolitan Sergius may be sufficiently placed in this category as well, if one has in mind such an open violation by him of the freedom and dignity of the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. But beyond this, the canons themselves could not foresee many things, and can one dispute that it is even worse and more harmful than any heresy when one plunges a knife into the Church's very heart – Her freedom and dignity?... 'Lest imperceptibly and little by little we lose the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ, the Liberator of all men, has given us as a free gift by His Own Blood' (8<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council)... Perhaps I do not dispute that 'there are more of you at present than of us'. And let it be said that 'the great mass is not for me', as you say. But I will never consider myself a schismatic, even if I were to remain absolutely alone, as one of the holy confessors once was. The matter is not at all one of quantity, do not forget that for a minute: 'The Son of God when He cometh shall He find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18.8). And perhaps the last 'rebels' against the betrayers of the Church and the accomplices of Her ruin will be not only bishops and not protopriests, but the simplest mortals, just as at the Cross of Christ His last gasp of suffering was heard by a few simple souls who were close to Him..."

Sergius began issuing bans against the True Orthodox bishops – which were ignored by the True Orthodox. On December 30 Archbishop Demetrius wrote to the Muscovite priest Fr. Alexander Sidorov, who had been threatened with defrocking: "May the Lord help you to remain in peace and unanimity in the firm confession of the purity and truth of the Orthodox faith, helping each other with love in everything. Do not be disturbed by any bans that the apostates from the faith of Christ are preparing for you. Any ban or defrocking of you by Metropolitan Sergius, his synod or bishops for your stand in the Truth has not reality for you. As long as there remains just one firmly Orthodox bishop, have communion with him. If the Lord permits it, and you remain without a bishop,

then may the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, be with you all, inspiring you to solve all the questions which you may encounter on your path in the spirit of True Orthodoxy." Again, on January 4/17, 1928 he wrote "to Father Superiors": "Metropolitan Sergius... has sinned not only against the canonical order of the Church, but also dogmatically against her person, blaspheming the holiness of the exploit of her confessors by suspecting that their Christian convictions were impure and supposedly mixed with politics, against her Catholicity – by their and the synod's violent actions, against her Apostolicity – by subjecting the Church to secular orders and by the inner break with Metropolitan Peter (while preserving a false unity), who did not give Metropolitan Sergius the right to carry out his recent actions..."

Meanwhile, antisergianist groups were forming in different parts of the country. Thus between October 3 and 6 an antisergianist diocesan assembly took place in Ufa, and on November 8 Archbishop Andrew of Ufa issued an encyclical from Kzyl-Orda in which he said that "even if the lying Sergius repents, as he repented three times before of renovationism, under no circumstances must he be received into communion". This encyclical quickly circulated throughout Eastern Russia and Siberia. Again, in November, Bishop Victor of Glazov broke with Sergius. He had especially noted the phrase in the declaration that "only ivory-tower dreamers can think that such an enormous society as our Orthodox Church, with the whole of its organisation, can have a peaceful existence in the State while hiding itself from the authorities." To Sergius himself Bishop Victor wrote: "The enemy has lured and seduced you a second time with the idea of an organization of the Church. But if this organization is bought for the price of the Church of Christ Herself no longer remaining the house of Grace-giving salvation for men, and he who received the organization ceases to be what he was – for it is written, 'Let his habitation be made desolate, and his bishopric let another take' (Acts 1.20) – then it were better for us never to have any kind of organization. What is the benefit if we, having become by God's Grace temples of the Holy Spirit, become ourselves suddenly worthless, while at the same time receiving an organization for ourselves? No. Let the whole visible material world perish; let there be more important in our eyes the certain perdition of the soul to which he who presents such pretexts for sin will be subjected." And he concluded that Sergius' pact with the atheists was "not less than any heresy or schism, but is rather incomparably greater, for it plunges a man immediately into the abyss of destruction, according to the unlying word: 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men...' (Matthew 10.33)."

Bishop Victor wrote: "It is necessary that Moscow should begin to act, and not merely passively endure the mockeries on the Orthodox Church. Then other dioceses will be encouraged." However, in Moscow only a few parishes refused to recognize Metropolitan Sergius, and the true centre of the Catacomb Church remained Petrograd. Thus it was to Archbishop Demetrius in Petrograd that prominent Muscovites like Fr. Valentine Sventitsky referred. The clergy of Serpukhov under Bishop Maximus also saw Demetrius as their leader.

At the same time antisergianism began to develop in the Ukraine with the publication of the "Kievan appeal" by Schema-Archbishop Anthony (Abashidze), Bishop Damascene of Glukhov and Fr. Anatolius Zhurakovsky. They wrote concerning Sergius' declaration: "Insofar as the deputy of the patriarchal locum tenens makes declarations in the person of the whole Church and undertakes responsible decisions without the agreement of the locum tenens and an array of bishops, he is clearly going beyond the bounds of his prerogatives..." In December the Kievans were joined by two brother bishops – Archbishops Averky and Pachomius (Kedrov).

The True Orthodox bishops in the Ukraine separated into two groups: the Josephites, who completely rejected all communion with the sergianists, and a group led by Schema-Archbishop Anthony (Abashidze), which rejected Sergius' declaration, but remained in communion with both the Josephites and the Sergianists insofar as they all commemorated Metropolitan Sergius at the liturgy.

Also in the Ukraine was the famous writer Sergius Alexandrovich Nilus, who wrote to L.A. Orlov in February, 1928: "As long as there is a church of God that is not of 'the Church of the evildoers', go to it whenever you can; but if not, pray at home... They will say: 'But where will you receive communion? With whom? I reply: 'The Lord will show you, or an Angel will give you communion, for in 'the Church of the evildoers' there is not and cannot be the Body and Blood of the Lord. Here in Chernigov, out of all the churches only the church of the Trinity has remained faithful to Orthodoxy; but if it, too, will commemorate the [sergianist] Exarch Michael, and, consequently, will have communion in prayer with him, acting with the blessing of Sergius and his Synod, then we shall break communion with it."

On February 6, 1928 the hierarchs of the Yaroslavl diocese, led by Metropolitan Agathangel, signed an act of separation from Metropolitan Sergius. Metropolitan Joseph also signed the document. Two days later he announced to his Petrograd vicars, pastors and flock that he was taking upon himself the leadership of the Petrograd diocese. This persuaded the authorities to arrest him on February 29, and send him again to the Nikolo-Modensky monastery.

On March 11 Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod placed Metropolitan Joseph under ban. However, this did not prevent him from continuing to direct his two bishops in Petrograd, Archbishop Demetrius and Bishop Sergius, who also acted as a unifying focus for many True Orthodox in other parts of the country. Thus was born the "Josephite" movement, the most important branch of the Catacomb Church in the inter-war years...

In the birth of the Catacomb Church in 1927-28 we can see the rebirth of the spirit of the 1917-18 Council. In the previous decade, first under Patriarch Tikhon and then under Metropolitan Peter, the original fierce tone of reproach and rejection of the God-hating authorities, epitomized above all by the

anathematization of Soviet power, had gradually softened under the twin pressures of the Bolsheviks from without and the renovationists from within. Although the apocalyptic spirit of the Council remained alive in the masses, and prevented the Church leaders from actually commemorating the antichristian power, compromises continued to be made – compromises that were never repaid by compromises on the part of the Bolsheviks.

However, these acts did not cross the line separating compromise from apostasy. That line was passed by Metropolitan Sergius when he recognized *the God-cursed power to be God-established*, and ordered its commemoration while banning the commemoration of the confessing bishops. Already in the official church calendar for 1928 Sergius' church was looking like a Sovietized institution through its inclusion among the feasts of the church of: the memory of the Leader of the Proletariat Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (on the 32nd Sunday after Pentecost), the Overthrow of the Autocracy (in the Third Week of the Great Fast), the memory of the Paris Commune (the same week), the Day of the Internationale and the Day of the Proletarian Revolution.

At this point the spirit of the 1918 Council flared up again in all its original strength. For, as a "Letter from Russia" put it many years later: "It's no use our manoeuvring; there's nothing for us to preserve except the things that are God's. For the things that are Caesar's (if one should really consider it to be Caesar and not Pharaoh) are always associated with the quenching of the Spirit." Again, as Protopresbyter Michael Polsky wrote: "The Orthodoxy that submits to the Soviets and has become a weapon of the worldwide antichristian deception is not Orthodoxy, but the deceptive heresy of antichristianity clothed in the torn raiment of historical Orthodoxy..."

### 7. The Martyrdom of the Catacomb Church

From the beginning Metropolitan Sergius declared his opponents to be politically motivated. Thus in his Declaration he said: "The establishment of Soviet power seemed to many to be a kind of misunderstanding, accidental and therefore not long-lasting... To such people, who do not wish to understand 'the signs of the times', it may seem that it is impossible to break with the previous regime, and even with the monarchy, without breaking with Orthodoxy." On December 31 he and his Synod declared: "Only those wish to be in administrative separation from us who cannot renounce the idea of Christianity as an external force and are inclined to see the triumph of Christianity in the world only in the domination of Christian peoples over non-Christian ones" – in other words, in capitalist imperialism. Again, to the Petrograd delegation he said in the same month: "You are hindered from accepting my appeal by a political counter-revolutionary ideology."

The truth, however, was that it was Sergius, not his opponents, who were motivated by political considerations – in particular, his need to please his

political communist masters. So the accusations were hypocritical. In any case, if his opponents' crimes were political, it was not for him to impose ecclesiastical bans on them – as he himself had recognized in 1926.

And yet this is precisely what he did, as we have seen. Moreover, he went so far as to call the Catacomb Church graceless. On August 6, 1929 his synod declared: "The sacraments performed in separation from Church unity... by the followers of the former Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovykh) of Leningrad, the former Bishop Demetrius (Lyubimov) of Gdov, the former Bishop Alexis (Buj) of Urazov, as also of those who are under ban, are also invalid, and those who are converted from these schisms, if they have been baptized in schism, are to be received through Holy Chrismation."

However, as even the sergianist Bishop Manuel (Lemeshevsky) had to admit, these "schismatics" were among the finest hierarchs of the Russian Church: "It is the best pastors who have fallen away and cut themselves off, those who by their purity in the struggle with renovationism stood much higher than the others."

How many bishops supported Sergius?

According to Sergius Shumilo, "in a letter to his deputy, Archbishop Demetrius (Lyubimov) of Gdov, Metropolitan Joseph (Petrovich) of Petrograd wrote that already by the beginning of 1928 26 bishops had separated from Metropolitan Sergius. By the beginning of the 1930s, they already numbered about 40. Gradually their number increased still further. All these hierarchs had zealously opposed renovationism and remained faithful to Patriarch Tikhon in 1922-1923 (let us recall that in 1922 only 36 bishops remained faithful to the 'Tikhonite' church, while 37 (headed by Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and Alexis (Simansky) recognized the renovationist 'HCA'").

According to another estimate, out of the approximately 150 Russian bishops in 1927, 80 declared themselves definitely against the declaration, 17 separated from Sergius but did not make their position clear, and 9 at first separated but later changed their mind. These figures probably do not take into account all the secret bishops consecrated by the Ufa Autocephaly. In 1930 Sergius claimed he had 70% of the Orthodox bishops (not including the renovationists and Gregorians), which implies that about 30% of the Russian episcopate joined the Catacomb Church. According to the Catholic Bishop Michel D'Erbigny, once the Vatican's representative in Russia, three quarters of the episcopate separated from him; but this is probably an exaggeration.

In 1929, the Bolsheviks began to imprison the True Orthodox on the basis of membership of a "church monarchist organization" called "True Orthodoxy". The main case against the True Orthodox was called the case of "The All-Union Counter-Revolutionary Church Monarchist Organization, 'the True Orthodox Church'". Osipova notes that the numbers of True Orthodox Christians arrested



between 1929 and 1933 exceeded by seven times the numbers of clergy repressed from 1924 to 1928. In 1929 5000 clergy were repressed, three times more than in 1928; in 1930 – 13,000; in 1931-32 – 19,000.

It is hardly a coincidence that this persecution of the Church took place against the background of collectivization and a general attack on religion spearheaded by Yaroslavsky's League of Militant Godless (who numbered 17 million by 1933).

Vladimir Rusak writes: "1928, the beginning of collectivisation. Stalin could no longer 'leave the Church in the countryside'. In one interview he gave at that time he directly complained against 'the reactionary clergy' who were poisoning the souls of the masses. 'The only thing I can complain about is that the clergy was not liquidated root and branch,' he said. At the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the party he demanded that all weariness in the anti-religious struggle be overcome."

Also in 1928, economic cooperatives and all philanthropic organizations were banned. Then came the real killer, collectivization, which, together with the artificial famine that followed, claimed as many as 14 million lives. Collectivization can be seen as an attempt to destroy religion in its stronghold, the countryside, by destroying the economic base of village life and forcing all the villagers into communes completely dependent on the State. The peasants, led by their priests, put up a fierce opposition to it, and many were brought to trial and sentenced to the camps.

Husband writes: "On 8 April 1929, the VtsIK and Sovnarkom declaration 'On Religious Associations' largely superseded the 1918 separation of church and state and redefined freedom of conscience. Though reiterating central aspects of the 1918 separation decree, the new law introduced important limitations. Religious associations of twenty or more adults were allowed, but only if registered and approved in advance by government authorities. They retained their previous right to the free use of buildings for worship but still could not exist as a judicial person. Most important, the new regulations rescinded the previously guaranteed [!] right to conduct religious propaganda, and it reaffirmed the ban on religious instructions in state educational institutions. In effect, proselytising and instruction outside the home were illegal except in officially sanctioned classes, and religious rights of assembly and property were now more circumscribed."

"Henceforth," writes Nicholas Werth, "any activity 'going beyond the limits of the simple satisfaction of religious aspirations' fell under the law. Notably, section 10 of the much-feared Article 58 of the penal code stipulated that 'any use of the religious prejudices of the masses... for destabilizing the state' was punishable 'by anything from a minimum three-year sentence up to and including the death penalty'. On 26 August 1929 the government instituted the new five-day work week – five days of work, and one day of rest – which made it impossible to observe Sunday as a day of rest. This measure deliberately

introduced 'to facilitate the struggle to eliminate religion'.

"These decrees were no more than a prelude to a second, much larger phase of the antireligious campaign. In October 1929 the seizure of all church bells was ordered because 'the sound of bells disturbs the right to peace of the vast majority of atheists in the towns and the countryside'. Anyone closely associated with the church was treated like a kulak and forced to pay special taxes. The taxes paid by religious leaders increased tenfold from 1928 to 1930, and the leaders were stripped of their civil rights, which meant that they lost their ration cards and their right to medical care. Many were arrested, exiled, or deported. According to the incomplete records, more than 13,000 priests were 'dekulakised' in 1930. In many villages and towns, collectivisation began symbolically with the closure of the church, and dekulakization began with the removal of the local religious leaders. Significantly, nearly 14 percent of riots and peasant uprisings in 1930 were sparked by the closure of a church or the removal of its bells. The antireligious campaign reached its height in the winter of 1929-30; by 1 March 1930, 6,715 churches had been closed or destroyed. In the aftermath of Stalin's famous article 'Dizzy with Success' on 2 March 1930, a resolution from the Central Committee cynically condemned 'inadmissible deviations in the struggle against religious prejudices, particularly the administrative closure of churches without the consent of the local inhabitants'. This formal condemnation had no effect on the fate of the people deported on religious grounds.

"Over the next few years these great offensives against the church were replaced by daily administrative harassment of priests and religious organizations. Freely interpreting the sixty-eight articles of the government decree of 8 April 1929, and going considerably beyond their mandate when it came to the closure of churches, local authorities continued their guerrilla war with a series of justifications: 'unsanitary condition or extreme age' of the buildings in question, 'unpaid insurance', and non-payment of taxes or others of the innumerable contributions imposed on the members of religious communities. Stripped of their civil rights and their right to teach, and without the possibility of taking up other paid employment – a status that left them arbitrarily classified as 'parasitic elements living on unearned wages' – a number of priests had no option but to become peripatetic and to lead a secret life on the edges of society."

Vladimir Rusak writes: "[In 1929] about 15 hierarchs who did not share the position of Metropolitan Sergius were arrested. Metropolitan Cyril, the main 'opponent' of Metropolitan Sergius, was exiled to Turukhansk in June-July. The arrest procedure looked something like this: an agent of the GPU appeared before a bishop and put him a direct question: what is your attitude to the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius? If the bishop replied that he did not recognize it, the agent drew the conclusion: that means that you are a counter-revolutionary. The bishop was arrested."

Although the believers could not stop the might of the totalitarian state, God

sometimes put the persecutors to flight. Thus the Catacomb Christian P.M. writes: "I want to tell about the miracles of God of which I was a witness. In our village they closed the church and made it into a club. And then they declared that they would be showing a film – this was the first opening of the club. In the church everything was as it had been before, even the iconostasis was standing with its icons. They put in benches, hung up a screen and began to show the film. About half an hour passed, and then suddenly the people began to shout. Those who were at the back jumped up and rushed towards the exit, while those in front fell on the floor or crawled under the benches. What had happened? As many people later recounted, the holy Great Martyr George came out of an icon that was on the iconostasis on a horse, and taking a spear, galloped at the people, who began to flee in fear. But that was not the end of it. Somehow they got at any rate some of the people together again and continued to show the film. It was being shown by a mechanic and his assistant. And suddenly up in the choir they began to sing the Cherubic hymn – and so loudly that the film was scarcely audible. At that point they decided that some believers had climbed up and wanted to interrupt the showing of the film. So about seven members of the Komsomol and the assistant climbed up in order to catch them all and bring them down. But then they said that when they had climbed up the stairs the singing stopped, and they rejoiced – the believers had got frightened and fallen silent. But when they climbed up into the choir they saw that it was empty. They stood in bewilderment and could not understand how the singers could have run away. And then suddenly in the midst of them unseen singers began to sing the Cherubic hymn. Pursued by an unknown fear, they rushed to get out, not knowing the way, pushing and shoving each other. The assistant mechanic, who was running in front, suddenly fell down, and everyone ran over him since there was no other way because of the narrowness of the place. Having run down, they rushed out into the street. Now the showing was finally abandoned. The assistant mechanic was ill for a month and died, while the mechanic left, and nobody wanted to go to work in the club as a mechanic for any money. So from that time they stopped having a cinema in it."

This persecution began to arouse criticism in the West, from Pope Pius XI and the Archbishop of Canterbury. On February 14, 1930 the Politburo decided "to entrust to Comrades Yaroslavsky, Stalin and Molotov the decision of the question of an interview" to counter-act these criticisms. The result was two interviews, the first to Soviet correspondents on February 15 and published on February 16 in *Izvestia* and *Pravda* in the name of Sergius and those members of his Synod who were still in freedom, and a second to foreign correspondents three days later. In the first interview, which is now thought to have been composed entirely by the Bolsheviks with the active participation of Stalin, but whose authenticity was never denied by Sergius, it was asserted that "in the Soviet Union there was not and is not now any religious persecution", that "churches are closed not on the orders of the authorities, but at the wish of the population, and in many cases even at the request of the believers", that "the priests themselves are to blame, because they do not use the opportunities presented to them by the freedom to

preach" and that "the Church herself does not want to have any theological-educational institutions".

This interview, writes Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky, "was especially absurd and scandalous in the eyes of the simple people in that the universally venerated chapel of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God had just been destroyed. As N. Talberg writes, 'the Russian people, fearing not even the chekists, demonstrated their attitude to him (Metropolitan Sergius)... When Metropolitan Sergius went to serve in one of the large churches of Moscow, the crowd whistled at him in the streets, which had never happened before in spite of the most desperate agitation of the atheists. Bishop Pitirim, one of those who had signed the declaration in the press, was also whistled at and met in the same way. *Paris-Midi* for March 5 (№ 1392) informed its readers of the insults Metropolitan Sergius had been subjected to by his flock in Moscow. *Vozrozhdenie* for March 6 (№ 178) printed the report of the Berlin *Lokale Anzeiger* to the effect that when Metropolitan Sergius 'came out of the altar to serve the Liturgy, the crowd began to whistle and showered him with brickbats: "traitor", "Judas", "coward", etc. The noise was so great that Metropolitan Sergius was not able to serve and went into the crowd to pacify them. But the aroused parishioners tried to tear his vestments from him, spat at him and wanted to take off his patriarchal cross. Metropolitan Sergius had to leave the church. He tried to serve the Liturgy in another church, but the believers boycotted his service.' The Roman newspaper *Today* (№ 64), reporting the same incident, added that 'not one person' appeared at the service arranged by Metropolitan Sergius for the other church."

Commenting on the interview, Archbishop Andrew of Ufa wrote: "Such is the opinion of the false-head of the false-patriarchal church of Metropolitan Sergius... But who is going to recognize this head after all this? For whom does this lying head remain a head, in spite of his betrayal of Christ?... All the followers of the lying Metropolitan Sergius... have fallen away from the Church of Christ. The Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is somewhere else, not near Metropolitan Sergius and not near 'his Synod'."

Religious life did not cease but rather intensified in the underground. Wandering clergy served the faithful in secret locations around the country. Particular areas buzzed with underground activity. Thus Professor Ivan Andreyevsky testified that during the war he personally knew some 200 places of worship of the Catacomb Church in the Leningrad area alone. Popovsky writes that the Catacomb Church "arose in our midst at the end of the 20s. First one, then another priest disappeared from his parish, settled in a secret place and began the dangerous life of exiles. In decrepit little houses on the outskirts of towns chapels appeared. There they served the Liturgy, heard confessions, gave communion, baptized, married and even ordained new priests. Believers from distant towns and regions poured there in secret, passing on to each other the agreed knock on the door."

In these conditions of extreme persecution, it was almost impossible to unite the scattered groups of True Orthodox under a common leadership. But attempts were made... Thus we can infer from a remark of Hieromartyr Maximus, Bishop of Serpukhov, that there was *some* Catacomb Council in 1928 that anathematized the Sergianists. Another source has described a so-called "Nomadic Council" attended at different times and in different places by over 70 bishops in 1928 which likewise anathematized the Sergianists. But hard evidence for the existence of this council has proved hard to obtain, and there are some reasons for suspecting the authenticity of the description of the proceedings.

A "Little Council" of Catacomb bishops took place in Archangelsk in 1935. They met in order to approve an epistle issued in December, 1933 by Archbishop Seraphim of Uglich placing Metropolitan Sergius under ban for the anti-church actions he had committed since 1927: "We declare Metropolitan Sergius, who has violated the purity of the Orthodox faith, who has distorted the dogma of Salvation and of the Church, and who has caused a schism and blasphemed against the Church of Christ and Her confessors, and in scattering the Church has also blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, to be deprived of communion in prayer with us and with all the Orthodox bishops of the Russian Church. We commit him to ecclesiastical trial and ban him from serving. The bishops who think like Metropolitan Sergius are accepted by us into canonical and prayerful communion in accordance with the rite of reception from renovationism." One of those participating in this Council was Archbishop Theodore of Volokolamsk.

#### 8. ROCOR and Metropolitan Sergius

Probably late in 1927, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) wrote: "Now everywhere two epistles are being published in the newspapers and are being read in many churches which until recently were Orthodox – epistles of two, alas, former beloved pupils of mine with whom I was once in agreement, Metropolitans Sergius and Eulogius, who have now fallen away from the saving unity of the Church and have bound themselves to the enemies of Christ and the Holy Church – the disgusting blaspheming Bolsheviki, who have submitted themselves in everything to the representatives of the Jewish false teaching which everywhere goes under the name of communism or materialism... Let these new deceivers not justify themselves by declaring that they are not the friends of the Bolsheviki and Jews who stand at the head of the Bolshevik kingdom: in their souls they may not be their friends, but they have submitted, albeit unwillingly, to these enemies of Christ, and they are trying to increase their power not only over the hapless inhabitants of Holy Russia, but also over all Russian people."

On September 1, 1927, Archbishop Theophan of Poltava wrote: "It is impossible to recognize the epistle of Metropolitan Sergius as obligatory for ourselves. The just-completed Council of Bishops rejected this epistle. It was necessary to act in this way on the basis of the teaching of the Holy Fathers on what should be recognized as a canonical power to which Christians must submit.

St. Isidore of Pelusium, having pointed to the presence of the God-established order of the submission of some to others everywhere in the life of rational and irrational beings, draws the conclusion: 'Therefore we are right to say that the thing in itself, I mean power, that is, authority and royal power, have been established by God. But if a lawless evildoer seizes this power, we do not affirm that he has been sent by God, but we say that he, like Pharaoh, has been *permitted* to spew out this cunning and thereby inflict extreme punishment on and bring to their senses those for whom cruelty was necessary, just as the King of Babylon brought the Jews to their senses.' (*Works*, part II, letter 6). Bolshevik power in its essence is an antichristian power and there is no way that it can be recognized as God-established."

On September 5, the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR declared:

"1. The abroad part of the all-Russian Church must cease relations with the Moscow church authorities in view of the impossibility of normal relations with them and in view of its enslavement to the atheist Soviet power which deprives it of its freedom in its administration of the Church.

"2. So as to free our hierarchy in Russia from responsibility for the non-recognition of Soviet power by the abroad part of our Church, until the re-establishment of normal relations with Russia and until the liberation of our Church from the persecutions of Soviet power, the abroad part of our Church must administer itself in accordance with the sacred canons, the definitions of the Sacred Council of the All-Russian Local Orthodox Church of 1917-18 and the decree of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon and the Higher Administrative Council of November 7/20, 1920, with the help of the Hierarchical Synod and the Council of Bishops, under the presidency of Metropolitan Anthony of Kiev.

"3. The abroad part of the Russian Church considers itself to be an inseparable, spiritually-at-one branch of the Great Russian Church. It does not separate itself from its Mother Church and does not consider itself autocephalous. As before, it considers its head to be the Patriarchal Locum Tenens Metropolitan Peter and commemorates his name in Divine services.

"4. If there will come a decree of Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod on the exclusion of the abroad bishops and clergy who do not want to sign their loyalty to the Soviet government from the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate, this decree will be uncanonical."

On May 9, 1928 Metropolitan Sergius threatened to ban the ROCOR hierarchs if they did not dissolve their Administration. On June 20, his Synod issued another ukaz to the Church Abroad declaring that any clergyman who recognized the Moscow Synod but did not accept Soviet citizenship would be removed from his post. Nobody obeyed this ukaz...

On September 10, 1928, Metropolitan Anthony issued "the completely definitive declaration of our Synod of Bishops that the Moscow Synod has deprived itself of all authority, since it has entered into agreement with the atheists, and without offering any resistance it has tolerated the closing and destruction of the holy churches, and the other innumerable crimes of the Soviet government... That illegally formed organization which has entered into union with God's enemies, which Metropolitan Sergius calls an Orthodox Synod - but which the best Russian hierarchs, clergy and laymen have refused to recognize - ... must not be recognized by our Orthodox Churches, nor by our Synod of Bishops with its flock here abroad. Furthermore, the organization of the Moscow Synod must be recognized to be exactly the same sort of apostates from the Faith as the ancient libellatici, that is, Christians who although they refused to blaspheme openly against Christ and offer sacrifices to the idols, nevertheless still received from the priests of the idols false documents verifying that they were in complete accord with the adherents of pagan religion..."

Early in 1930, just after Sergius had given his interview denying that there had ever been persecutions against the faith in Soviet Russia, the archbishop of Canterbury invited Metropolitan Eulogius of Paris to go to London for one day of prayers for the suffering Church of Russia. "I decided to go," he wrote. "The whole of England will pray for us, and I will remain in Paris as a witness of the unanimous sympathy of all the Churches for our suffering Church, but not take part? Impossible! My conscience ordered me to take part in these prayers; and my flock undoubtedly felt the same way.

"I spent about a week in England. It is a long time since I experienced such a radiant feeling of brotherly Christian love between the Churches as I experienced in those unforgettable days, when the whole of ecclesiastical and believing England prayed on her knees for a cessation of the terrible sufferings of our Russian Orthodox Church... I pursued no political aims in England, and nowhere gave political speeches. Everywhere that I had to give speeches I only gave thanks for their sympathy and asked them to support our suffering Mother Church by their prayers. And now these speeches have served as an excuse for a strict inquiry from Metropolitan Sergius in Moscow: on what basis could I allow myself to go round England calling people to protest against the USSR? Then it was demanded that I condemn my journey and give an undertaking not to repeat such speeches... It was bitter for me to read these unjust reproaches, which were dictated by Soviet power, and I replied sharply to Metropolitan Sergius that my prayers in England did not have a political, but only a religious character: it was a protest of the religious and in general the human conscience against the terrible persecutions against the Church in Soviet Russia..."

On June 10, 1930, Sergius retired Metropolitan Eulogius from his post administering the Russian parishes in Western Europe. On July 10 Eulogius broke communion with the MP, and in February was received by Constantinople...

On May 6, 1933 Metropolitan Anthony wrote to Sergius, who had reproached the ROCOR bishops for abandoning their sees: "... It is not from you and not for us to hear an exhortation to martyrdom, which we would not have avoided if we had stayed in the South of Russia. We are ready to listen to it and to many such reproaches, if we deserve them, from those who even now display an example of confession, and have not, like you, sold the purity of the faith for a mess of pottage of seeming freedom, which is in fact the most heavy and shameful slavery...

"What divides you from us is the fact that you, in your desire to guarantee a secure existence for your ecclesiastical centre, have tried to unite light with darkness. You have fallen into the temptation whose essence was revealed in the holy Gospel. Once the spirit of evil tried to draw even the Son of God Himself by a picture of external easy success, placing as a condition His worship of him, the son of destruction. You have not followed the example of Christ, the holy martyrs and confessors, who rejected such a compromise, but have bowed down to the age-old enemy of our salvation, when, for the sake of an illusory success, for the sake of the preservation of an external organization, you declared that the joys of the godless authorities are your joys and its enemies your enemies. You even tried to remove the crowns from the recent martyrs and confessors (including yourself, for I know that once you showed firmness and were in prison), affirming that they are suffering imprisonment, exile and torments not for the name of Christ, but as counter-revolutionaries. In this way you blasphemed against them. You denigrated their exploit, and dampened the enthusiasm of those who could have been numbered to the ranks of the martyrs for the faith. You excommunicated them from the flower and adornment of the Russian church. In this neither I nor my brothers abroad will ever follow you... We have no intercourse with the Orthodox archpastors, pastors and laymen who are imprisoned in Russia, except that we pray for them and know that they suffer only for the faith, though the persecutors charge them with State crimes which are alien to them, as the enemies of the Christians loved to do in ancient times... For you the way of the cross is now madness like it was to the Greeks contemporary with the Apostles (I Corinthians 1.23). I implore you, as a pupil and friend, free yourself from this temptation, renounce publicly every lie which Tuchkov and other enemies of the Church have put into your mouth, do not yield in the face of probably tortures. If you are counted worthy of a martyr's crown, the earthly and heavenly Churches will combine in glorification of your courage and of the Lord Who strengthened you; but if you stay on this wide path leading you to perdition (Matthew 7.13), on which you stand now, you will be ignominiously led to the pit of hell and until the end of its earthly existence the Church will not forget your betrayal. I always think of this when I look at the panagia of the Vladimir Mother of God with the engraved inscription which you presented to me twenty years ago: 'To a dear teacher and friend.' Your further words in this inscription are: 'give us some of your oil, for our lamps are fading.' Here we offer you the salutary oil of faith and loyalty in the Holy Church. *Do not refuse it, but reunite with it* as in 1922 when you solemnly declared to Patriarch



Tikhon your repentance for your former wavering loyalty. Do not refuse the friendly appeal of one who tenderly loved you and continues to love you. Metropolitan Anthony."

On July 8, 1933 the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR issued an encyclical to the Russian Orthodox flock with regard to Sergius' epistle of March 23: "His appeal in its essence remains the same as it was in 1927 and can be formulated in the words: he who is with Soviet power is with the Russian Church; he who is against the former cannot be with the latter. In this way the link with the Mother Church can be realized for us in no other way than by accepting the God-fighting authorities that now rule in Russia. Before stretching out the hand of communion with Metropolitan Sergius, we must stretch it out first to the Bolsheviks and receive from them attestation of our political reliability, without which the deputy of the locum tenens cannot re-establish fraternal and canonical union with us..."

At the same time, this encyclical, - penned, according to Archbishop Nikon of Washington, by Metropolitan Anastasy, - declared: "As regards relations toward the Mother Church, the Russian ecclesial organization abroad has considered itself no more than a branch of the latter, bound organically to the whole body of the Church of Russia, even though temporarily deprived only of outward unity with the latter in ecclesiastical administration."

"To the present day the entire Church organization abroad has considered and still considers itself an extraordinary and temporary institution, which must be abolished without delay after the restoration of normal social and ecclesiastical life in Russia.

<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub> "We are taking fully into account the extraordinary difficulties of the position of Metropolitan Sergius, who is now the de facto head of the Church of Russia, and are aware of the heavy burden of responsibility for the fate of the latter, which lies upon him. No one, therefore, has the audacity to accuse him for the mere attempt to enter into dialogue with the Soviet regime so as to obtain legal standing for the Church of Russia. Not without foundation does the deputy locum tenens of the Patriarchal Throne say in his aforementioned Declaration that only 'armchair dreamers can think that such a vast community as our Orthodox Church, with all its organization, can exist peacefully in a country while walling itself off from the authorities.' While the church exists on earth, it remains closely bound up with the fates of human society and cannot be imagined outside time and space. It is impossible for it to refrain from all contact with a powerful societal organization such as the government; otherwise it would have to leave the world."

However, in his 1934 Paschal encyclical Metropolitan Anthony was stricter: "It is noteworthy that several hierarchs and their flocks, for the most part Russians, have already fallen away from Ecumenical unity, and to the question: 'What do you believe?', reply with references to self-proclaimed heads of all sorts of

schisms in Moscow, America, and Western Europe. It is clear that, without admitting it, they have ceased to believe in the unity of the Church throughout the world. They try to bear calmly the refusal of the true Church to have relations with them, and imagine that one can save one's soul even without communion with Her... Unfortunately, some Orthodox laymen, even, alas, many priests (and hierarchs) have subjected themselves to this state of gracelessness, although still retaining the outward appearance of the church services and the apparent performance of the Mysteries..."

On July 5, 1934, Metropolitan Sergius banned the ROCOR hierarchs. On August 7, Metropolitan Anthony wrote to Metropolitan Eleutherius of Lithuania explaining that he could not accept this ban because "a hierarch cannot be removed from his see except through a trial". Now Eleutherius was a supporter of Sergius, and on the departure of Metropolitan Eulogius for Constantinople was entrusted with oversight of the patriarchal parishes in Western Europe. In 1935 he published a book defending the MP against ROCOR and Metropolitan Anthony, in which he argued that while Soviet power acted in the religious sphere "by the inspiration of Satan", Christians were still bound to obey it, because "all power is from God". If they obeyed Soviet power, as God commanded, then Soviet power, "would see this, and the Spirit of God would proclaim good things for the Church through it".

Professor Ivan Ilyin subjected this argument to detailed criticism. The communists could not be simultaneously servants of God and servants of Satan. If they were acting "by the inspiration of Satan", as was clearly the case, then they had to be opposed. In any case, Church history contained many examples of hierarchs refusing to obey the secular authorities, beginning with the apostles who told the Sanhedrin: "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5.29).

Ilyin quotes "the law of freedom" (James 1.25; I Peter 2.16) to illumine the meaning of the words "all power is from God". They "signify not that power is unrestrained, but that it is bound and limited. 'Being from God' *means being called* to the service of God and *undertaking* this service; it binds and limits this power. It does not mean that the power is free to do any baseness or abomination, sin or iniquity, and that, whatever it does, it will always 'come from God', and that obedience in conscience will be demanded by it from its subjects as if it were the voice of God. But it means that the power is established by God *for the doing of good and the overcoming of evil*; that it must rule precisely in this way, and not otherwise. And if it does rule in this way, the subjects are obliged to obey it out of conscience.

"Thus the calling of the power by God becomes for it a rule and obligation, as it were a court before the face of God. While the free obedience of subjects according to conscience turns out to be strengthened, but also limited, by this law. But how far is it 'limited'? To the extent that the law of Christian freedom calls them to loyalty or forbids them to show loyalty.

“And it is precisely to this freedom, infused with love, conscience and clear perception of its object, that we must turn for an exit when the power turns out to be in the hands of Satan, whom we can in no way serve or want to serve – neither out of fear, nor for conscience’s sake. We can and must serve only God, for we are ‘servants of God’ (I Peter 2.16); we are called to serve Him *in freedom*, speaking and acting as people who must be judged, not according to the letter of the Scripture, but according to the law of freedom. And if it turns out that according to our free and object-directed Christian conscience (not out of arbitrariness or passion!), this power is satanic, then we are called to condemn it, refuse to obey it and conduct a struggle against it in word and deed, by no means using our Christian freedom in order to cover up evil, that is, without distorting the voice of our Christian conscience, and not embellishing the words of Satan and not ascribing them in crookedness of soul to Christ...”

The issue dividing ROCOR and Metropolitan Sergius is often described by the supporters of Sergius as “political” – a question only of the political recognition of the Soviet regime. However, as the Catacomb confessor Professor Ivan Andreyev pointed out: “To dissociate oneself in principle from any politics is impossible for an Orthodox person, for religion and politics are at the present time organically blended. The question: to be with Christ or against Him, has a political meaning today, because it commits one to protesting against those political systems which have as their main goal the destruction of Christianity. Whoever at the present time denies the necessity of political discussions (reasoning) and jurisdictional explanations (interpretations) denies the necessity of distinguishing the wolves in sheep’s clothing and finding out where Christ is and where the Antichrist...”

### **9. Three Holy Hieromartyrs**

In May, 1932, Stalin declared an anti-religious five-year plan: by 1936 the last church was to be closed, and by 1937 the name of God would no longer be pronounced in the Soviet Union. By the beginning of 1933 half the churches in the land had been closed or destroyed. But the census of 1937 established that two-thirds of the peasantry and one-third of the city-dwellers still maintained their faith in God. This impressive figure owed nothing to Sergius’ pact with the State, which divided the faithful and gave the atheists a powerful weapon against them.

In 1933 Metropolitan Sergius stated officially in the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* that he “as the deputy of Metropolitan Peter, had not only the temporary authority of the First Hierarch but the Patriarchal Power as well”. He also declared that Metropolitan Peter, the lawful First Hierarch, did not have the right “to interfere in the administration of the Church or even correct the mistakes of his deputy.” As a result of this statement, Bishop Athanasius (Sakharov) of Kovrov broke communion with Sergius, as he stated in a letter to him on his return from exile in December, 1933.

In April, 1934 Sergius' Synod gave him the title of Metropolitan of Kolomna, thereby making him in effect an "adulterer bishop", for the true holder of the see, Metropolitan Peter, was still alive. In 1935 Metropolitan Peter returned to Moscow and met Metropolitan Sergius. The latter asked him to recognize the new construction of Church life and to agree to the convening of a Council. On his side, Metropolitan Peter demanded that Sergius return Church power to him. Sergius refused, and Peter returned to the camps. In August, 1936, the NKVD spread the rumour that Metropolitan Peter had died. The Sergianist Synod promptly – and completely uncanonically – passed a resolution transferring the rights and duties of the patriarchal *locum tenens* to Metropolitan Sergius.

In view of this further departure of Metropolitan Sergius from the holy canons, it may be asked what was the reaction of the leading hierarchs of the Catacomb Church – Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, the patriarchal *locum tenens* and *de jure* leader of the Church, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, her *de facto* leader, and Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan, the first *locum tenens* appointed by Patriarch Tikhon and the favoured candidate of the Russian episcopate for the role of patriarch.

Metropolitan Peter's attitude was particularly important to ascertain in view of the fact that both the True Orthodox and the sergianists formally acknowledged him as the Church's first hierarch. Earlier, Bishop Damascene of Glukhov had claimed to have made contact with him through his cell-attendant, who reported that Metropolitan Peter expressed disapproval of Sergius' policies. Thus on January 22, 1928 he wrote to a certain N. "For a first-hierarch such an appeal [as Sergius' declaration] is *inadmissible*. Moreover, I don't understand why a Synod was formed from (as I can see from the signatures under the appeal) unreliable people. Thus, for example, Bishop Philip is a heretic... In this appeal a shadow is cast upon me and the patriarch, as if we had political relations with abroad, whereas the only relations were ecclesiastical. I do not belong to the irreconcilables, I allowed everything that could be allowed, and it was suggested to me in a more polite manner that I sign the appeal. I refused, for which I was exiled. I trusted Metropolitan Sergius, and I see that I was mistaken."

On September 17, 1929, the priest Gregory Seletsky wrote to Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd on behalf of Archbishop Demetrius (Lyubimov): "I am fulfilling the request of his Eminence Archbishop Demetrius and set out before you in written form that information which the exiled Bishop Damascene has communicated to me. He succeeded in making contact with Metropolitan Peter, and in sending him, via a trusted person, full information about everything that has been taking place in the Russian Church. Through this emissary Metropolitan Peter said the following to him: '1. You Bishops must yourselves remove Metropolitan Sergius. '2. I do not bless you to commemorate Metropolitan Sergius during Divine services...'"

In December, 1929 Metropolitan Peter wrote to Sergius: "Your Eminence, forgive me magnanimously if by the present letter I disturb the peace of your Eminence's soul. People inform me about the difficult circumstances that have formed for the Church in connection with the exceeding of the limits of the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to you. I am very sorry that you have not taken the trouble to initiate me into your plans for the administration of the Church. You know that I have not renounced the locum tenancy, and consequently, I have retained for myself the Higher Church Administration and the general leadership of Church life. At the same time I make bold to declare that your remit as deputy was only for the management of everyday affairs; you are only to preserve the status quo. I am profoundly convinced that without prior contact with me you will not make any responsible decision. I have not accorded you any constituent right as long as I retain the locum tenancy and as long as Metropolitan Cyril is alive and as long as Metropolitan Agathangelus was alive. Therefore I did not consider it necessary in my decree concerning the appointment of candidates for the deputyship to mention the limitation of their duties; I had no doubt that the deputy would not alter the established rights, but would only deputize, or represent, so to speak, the central organ through which the locum tenens could communicate with his flock. But the system of administration you have introduced not only excludes this: it also excludes the very need for the existence of the locum tenens. Such major steps cannot, of course, be approved by the consciousness of the Church. I did not admit any qualifications limiting the duties of the deputy, both from a feeling of deep reverence and trust for the appointed candidates, and first of all for you, having in mind at this point your wisdom. It is burdensome for me to number all the details of negative evaluations of your administration: the resounding protests and cries from believers, from hierarchs and laypeople. The picture of ecclesiastical division that has been painted is shocking. My duty and conscience do not allow me to remain indifferent to such a sorrowful phenomenon; they urge me to address your Eminence with a most insistent demand that you correct the mistake you have made, which has placed the Church in a humiliating position, and which has caused quarrels and divisions in her and a blackening of the reputation of her leaders. In the same way I ask you to suspend the other measures that have increased your prerogatives. Such a decision of yours will, I hope, create a good atmosphere in the Church and will calm the troubled souls of her children, while with regard to you it will preserve that disposition towards you which you deservedly enjoyed both as a Church figure and as a man. Place all your hope on the Lord, and His help will always be with you. On my part, I as the first-hierarch of the Church, call on all clergy and church activists to display, in everything that touches on the civil legislation and administration, complete loyalty. They are obliged to submit unflinchingly to the governmental decrees as long as they do not violate the holy faith and in general are not contrary to Christian conscience; and they must not engage in any anti-governmental activity, and they are allowed to express neither approval nor disapproval of their actions in the churches or in private conversations, and in general they must not interfere in matters having nothing to do with the Church..."

On February 13/26, 1930, after receiving news from Deacon K. about the true state of affairs in the Church, Metropolitan Peter wrote to Sergius: "Of all the distressing news I have had to receive, the most distressing was the news that many believers remain outside the walls of the churches in which your name is commemorated. I am filled with spiritual pain both about the disputes that have arisen with regard to your administration and about other sad phenomena. Perhaps this information is biased, perhaps I am not sufficiently acquainted with the character and aims of the people writing to me. But the news of disturbances in the Church come to me from various quarters and mainly from clerics and laymen who have made a great impression on me. In my opinion, in view of the exceptional circumstances of Church life, when normal rules of administration have been subject to all kinds of distortion, it is necessary to put Church life on that path on which it stood during your first period as deputy. So be so good as to return to that course of action that was respected by everybody. I repeat that I am very sad that you have not written to me or confided your plans to me. Since letters come from other people, yours would undoubtedly have reached me..."

From August 17, 1930, after again refusing to renounce the locum tenancy, Metropolitan Peter was imprisoned in Tobolsk and Yekaterinburg prisons in solitary confinement with no right to receive parcels or visitors. On March 11, 1931, after describing the sufferings of his life in Khe (which included the enmity of three renovationist priests), he posed the following question in a letter to J.B. Polyansky: "Will not a change in locum tenens bring with it a change also in his deputy? Of course, it is possible that my successor, if he were to find himself incapable of carrying out his responsibilities directly, would leave the same person as his deputy - that is his right. But it is certain, in my opinion, that the carrying out of his duties by this deputy would have to come to an end at the same time as the departure of the person for whom he is deputizing, just as, according to the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, with his departure the synod created by him would cease to exist. All this and other questions require thorough and authoritative discussion and canonical underpinning... Be so kind as to bow to Metropolitan Sergius on my behalf, since I am unable to do this myself, and send him my fervent plea that he, together with Metropolitan Seraphim and Archbishop Philip, to whom I also bow, work together for my liberation. I beseech them to defend, an old man who can hardly walk. I was always filled with a feeling of deep veneration and gratitude to Metropolitan Sergius, and the thought of some kind of worsening of our relations would give me indescribable sorrow."

On March 27, Metropolitan Peter wrote to B.P. Menzhinsky: "I was given a five-year exile which I served in the far north in the midst of the cruellest frosts, constant storms, extreme poverty and destitution in everything. (I was constantly on the edge of the grave.) But years passed, and there remained four months to the end of my exile when the same thing began all over again - I was again arrested and imprisoned by the Urals OGPU. After some time I was visited by

comrade J.V. Polyansky, who suggested that I renounce the locum tenancy. But I could not accept such a suggestion for the following reasons which have a decisive significance for me. First of all I would be transgressing the established order according to which the locum tenens must remain at his post until the convening of a council. A council convened without the sanction of the locum tenens would be considered uncanonical and its decisions invalid. But in the case of my death the prerogatives of the locum tenens will pass to another person who will complete that which was not done by his predecessor. Moreover, my removal would bring in its wake the departure also of my deputy, Metropolitan Sergius, just as, according to his declaration, with his departure from the position of deputy the Synod created by him would cease to exist. I cannot be indifferent to such a circumstance. Our simultaneous departure does not guarantee church life from various possible frictions, and, of course, the guilt would be mine. Therefore in the given case it is necessary that we discuss this matter together, just as we discussed together the questions relating to my letter to Metropolitan Sergius dated December, 1929. Finally, my decree, coming from prison, would undoubtedly be interpreted as made under pressure, with various undesirable consequences."

In spite of this strong criticism, it is not known that Metropolitan Peter declared that Metropolitan Sergius had fallen from grace; and according to one (possibly dubious) source, he, together with Metropolitan Cyril, refused to sign the sixth canon of the so-called "Nomadic Council" in 1928, which anathematised the sergianists.

Nevertheless, he continued not only to resist pressure from the OGPU to give up the locum tenancy himself, but also rejected the right of Metropolitan Sergius to take it over after his death. Thus on March 11, 1931, he posed the following question to I.B. Polyansky: "Will not a change in locum tenens bring with it a change also in his deputy? Of course, it is possible that my successor, if he were to find himself incapable of carrying out his responsibilities directly, would leave the same person as his deputy – that is his right. But it is certain, in my opinion, that the carrying out of his duties by this deputy would have to come to an end at the same time as the departure of the person for whom he is deputizing, just as, according to the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, with his departure the synod created by him would cease to exist. All this and other questions require thorough and authoritative discussion and canonical underpinning..." He repeated the same argument in a letter to Menzhinsky later that month.

We have no direct evidence for Metropolitan Peter's views after 1931. Indirectly, however, we can infer that his attitude towards Metropolitan Sergius hardened. For, as the True Orthodox Confessor and Professor Ivan Andreyev witnesses, "approval of the position of Metropolitan Joseph [whose views on Sergius are known to have been uncompromisingly severe] was received from the exiled Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa and from Metropolitan Cyril".

Moreover, “from the fact that in the last years secret relations were established between Metropolitan Peter and Metropolitan Joseph, we may conjecture that Metropolitan Peter gave his blessing, in the event of his death, to Metropolitan Joseph’s heading the Russian Church in his capacity as *Extraordinary Locum Tenens*. This right was accorded to Metropolitan Joseph, as is known only to a few, by a Decision of the Local Council of 1917-18 dated January 25, 1918.”

Metropolitan Cyril, like Metropolitan Peter, at first took a relatively “lenient” attitude towards the sergianists. Thus in 1934 he wrote: “If we reproach them for not resisting, and, therefore, of belonging to heresy, we risk depriving them of the psychological opportunity to reunite with us and losing them forever for Orthodoxy.”

This relative leniency has been exploited by those who wish to make out that the MP is a true Church even now, nearly eighty years after Sergius’ declaration. However, there are several reasons for thinking that Cyril was less “moderate” than he has been made out.

First, as his correspondent, another Catacomb hierarch said, he was being “excessively cautious” because of his insufficient knowledge of the Church situation from his position in exile. Secondly, he was in the unique position of being the only legal *locum tenens* that was able to correspond and reason with Sergius. He therefore naturally steered the dialogue to the theme of the canonical rights of the *locum tenentes* and their deputies, convicting Sergius of usurpation of the power of the First Hierarch. Concentrating on the *canonical-administrative* aspect of the matter, without entering into the *dogmatic* aspect of Sergius’ subordination to the atheists, was bound to lead to a less serious estimate of his sin. Nevertheless, in 1934 he wrote that while the Sergianist priests administered valid sacraments, Christians who partook of them knowing of Sergius’ usurpation of power and the illegality of his Synod would receive them *to their condemnation*.

Several points made by Metropolitan Cyril in his correspondence with Metropolitan Sergius are of vital importance in evaluating the significance of the various schisms that have taken place in the Orthodox Church in this century. The first is the priority of “the conciliar hierarchical conscience of the Church”. As he wrote in 1929: “Church discipline is able to retain its validity only as long as it is a true reflection of the hierarchical conscience of the Conciliar [*Sobornoj*] Church; discipline can never take the place of this conscience”. Sergius violated the hierarchical, conciliar conscience of the Church by his disregard of the views of bishops equal to him in rank.

The second is that a hierarch is justified in breaking communion with a fellow hierarch, not only for heresy, but also in order not to partake in his brother’s sin. Thus while Metropolitan Cyril did not consider Sergius to have sinned in matters of faith, he was forced to break communion with him because “I have no other



means of rebuking my sinning brother". If clergy have mutually opposing opinions within the Church, then their concelebration is for both "to judgement and condemnation".

Again, in November, 1929, Metropolitan Cyril refused to condemn Metropolitan Joseph and his supporters, who had broken communion with Sergius; and he did not agree with the bishops in exile in Tashkent – Arsenius (Stadnitsky), Nicodemus (Krotkov), Nicander (Fenomenov) and others – who condemned Joseph, considering their hopes of convening a canonical Council to be "naivety or cunning".

Thirdly, while Metropolitan Cyril did not deny the sacraments of the sergianists, he did so only in respect of those clergy who had been *correctly ordained*, i.e. by non-sergianist hierarchs.

A fourth point made by the metropolitan was that even when such a break in communion occurs between two parties, both sides remain in the Church so long as dogmatic unanimity is preserved. But this immediately raised the question: had Sergius only sinned "administratively", by transgressing against the canons, as Metropolitan Cyril claimed (until 1934, at any rate), or had he sinned also "dogmatically", by transgressing against the dogma of the One Church, as Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov, among others, claimed?

In about the middle of the 1930s Metropolitan Cyril issued an epistle in which he called on the Catacomb hierarchs to confirm his candidacy as the lawful patriarchal locum tenens in the case of the death of Metropolitan Peter. We know the reaction of one hierarch, Archbishop Theodore of Volokolamsk, to this epistle. He was not enthusiastic, because he considered that in times of persecution a centralized administration was not obligatory for the Church. In any case, at some time in the 1930s, as we have seen, both Metropolitan Peter and Metropolitan Cyril came to accept that Metropolitan *Joseph* should lead the Russian Church in the event of Metropolitan Peter's death.

Metropolitan Cyril's position hardened towards the end of his life. Thus in March, 1937 he wrote: "With regard to your perplexities concerning Sergianism, I can say that the very same questions in almost the same form were addressed to me from Kazan ten years ago, and then I replied affirmatively to them, because I considered everything that Metropolitan Sergius had done as a mistake which he himself was conscious of and wished to correct. Moreover, among our ordinary flock there were many people who had not investigated what had happened, and it was impossible to demand from them a decisive and active condemnation of the events. Since then much water has flowed under the bridge. The expectations that Metropolitan Sergius would correct himself have not been justified, *but there has been enough time for the formerly ignorant members of the Church, enough incentive and enough opportunity to investigate what has happened*; and very many have both investigated and understood that Metropolitan Sergius is departing from that

Orthodox Church which the Holy Patriarch Tikhon entrusted to us to guard, and consequently there can be no part or lot with him for the Orthodox. The recent events have finally made clear the renovationist nature of Sergianism. We cannot know whether those believers who remain in Sergianism will be saved, because the work of eternal Salvation is a work of the mercy and grace of God. But for those who see and feel the unrighteousness of Sergianism (those are your questions) it would be unforgiveable craftiness to close one's eyes to this unrighteousness and seek there for the satisfaction of one's spiritual needs when one's conscience doubts in the possibility of receiving such satisfaction. Everything which is not of faith is sin..."

This is an important document, for it shows that by 1937 Metropolitan Cyril considered that enough time had passed for the ordinary believer to come to a correct conclusion concerning the true, "renovationist" – that is, *heretical* – nature of Sergianism. So from 1937, in Metropolitan Cyril's opinion, "the excuse of ignorance" was no longer valid. What had been involuntary ignorance in the early days of the schism was now (except in exceptional circumstances caused by, for example, extreme youth or mental deficiency) *witting* ignorance – that is, *indifference to the truth or refusal to face the truth*.

This view is confirmed by Schema-Monk Epiphanius, who writes that during their imprisonment together in Chimkent, "when they let Metropolitans Cyril and Joseph go out for a walk, they stuck together: the tall Metropolitan Joseph and the stocky, short Metropolitan Cyril. And these two figures, as it seemed, merged into one, symbolising 'the unity of two in one'. The metropolitans walked in a circle and were continually engaged in conversation – after all, it was impossible to overhear them there. And during their walk they were constantly watched from a hill by some Catacomb nuns to whom the metropolitans, at the end of their walk, gave their blessing – it was necessary to disguise this, so that the guards should not notice their secret signalling."

"And this signalling, as was later made known by these same Catacomb nuns, consisted further in the following sign: that when Metropolitan Cyril several times bowed beneath the elbow of Metropolitan Joseph, this meant that he completely recognized the authority and leadership of the latter for himself."

### 10. Secret Catacomb Councils

On November 20, 1937, Metropolitans Joseph and Cyril were shot together in Chimkent. Following on the shooting of Metropolitan Peter on October 10, this meant that all of the holy patriarch's locum tenentes, both "ordinary" and "extraordinary", were now dead... The martyrdom of the last de jure and de facto leaders of the Catacomb Church placed the Russian Church in an unprecedented situation.

Nun Vassa writes: "In connection with the death of the locum tenens of the

patriarchal throne, Hieromartyr Peter of Krutitsa, an 'Act on the lawful succession of the title of locum tenens of the Moscow patriarchal throne and the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church after the death of Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa' was drawn up at the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR in December, 1937. Recognizing the claims of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) to be unlawful, the Hierarchical Council recognized Metropolitan Cyril as the lawful locum tenens, not knowing that Hieromartyr Cyril had been shot on November 20, 1937. However, in view of the persecutions the Council admitted that it was impossible openly to commemorate Metropolitan Cyril, and decreed: 'To commemorate Metropolitan Cyril as locum tenens of the Moscow patriarchal throne and head of the Russian Church at the proskomedia and in private prayers, but to refrain from proclaiming his name during the Divine services, so as not to draw upon him heavy persecutions on the part of the atheist power of the Bolsheviks. The present act is to be preserved without publication, as a witness to future times concerning the lawful succession of the leadership of the Russian Church.' Instead of openly commemorating Metropolitan Cyril's name, the Council decreed that 'the Orthodox Episcopate of the Russian [Rossijskaia] Church' should be commemorated. However, there is no more detailed explanation of this formula in the protocols of 1937.

"From what has been said we may conclude that at first 'the Orthodox Episcopate of the Russian Church' signified a concrete person, the patriarchal locum tenens Metropolitan Cyril, since his name could not be raised openly. This formula signified at the same time also that the Hierarchical Council did not recognize Metropolitan Sergius to be the head of the Russian Church."

And so by the end of 1937, the Church's descent into the catacombs, which had begun in the early 20s, was completed. From now on, with the external administrative machinery of the Church destroyed, it was up to each bishop – sometimes each believer – individually to preserve the fire of faith, being linked with his fellow Christians only through the inner, mystical bonds of the life in Christ. Thus was the premonition of Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene fulfilled: "Perhaps the time has come when the Lord does not wish that the Church should stand as an intermediary between Himself and the believers, but that everyone is called to stand directly before the Lord and himself answer for himself as it was with the forefathers!"

This judgement was supported by ROCOR at its Second All-Emigration Council in 1938: "Since the epoch we have lived through was without doubt an epoch of apostasy, it goes without saying that for the true Church of Christ a period of life in the wilderness, of which the twelfth chapter of the Revelation of St. John speaks, is not, as some may believe, an episode connected exclusively with the last period in the history of mankind. History show us that the Orthodox Church has withdrawn into the wilderness repeatedly, from whence the will of God called her back to the stage of history, where she once again assumed her role under more favourable circumstances. At the end of history the Church of

God will go into the wilderness for the last time to receive Him, Who comes to judge the quick and the dead. Thus the twelfth chapter of Revelation must be understood not only in an eschatological sense, but in a historical and educational sense as well: it shows up the general and typical forms of Church life. If the Church of God is destined to live in the wilderness through the Providence of the Almighty Creator, the judgement of history, and the legislation of the proletarian state, it follows clearly that she must forego all attempts to reach a legalization, for every attempt to arrive at a legalization during the epoch of apostasy inescapably turns the Church into the great Babylonian whore of blasphemous atheism. The near future will confirm our opinion and prove that the time has come in which the welfare of the Church demands giving up all legalizations, even those of the parishes. We must follow the example of the Church prior to the Council of Nicaea, when the Christian communities were united not on the basis of the administrative institutions of the State, but through the Holy Spirit alone."

Perhaps the most striking and literal example of the Church's fleeing into the wilderness is provided by Bishop Amphilochius of Yenisei and Krasnoyarsk, who in 1930 departed into the Siberian forests and founded a catacomb skete there in complete isolation from the world. However, the Catacomb Church was still able to issue decrees in this period, such as the following anathema attached to the Order for the Triumph of Orthodoxy in Josephite parishes: "To those who maintain the mindless renovationist heresy of sergianism; to those who teach that the earthly existence of the Church of God can be established by denying the truth of Christ; and to those who affirm that serving the God-fighting authorities and fulfilling their godless commands, which trample on the sacred canons, the patristic traditions and the Divine dogmas, and destroy the whole of Christianity, saves the Church of Christ; and to those who revere the Antichrist and his servants and forerunners, and all his minions, as a lawful power established by God; and to all those... who blaspheme against the new confessors and martyrs (Sergius of Nizhni-Novgorod, Nicholas of Kiev and Alexis of Khutyn), and to... the renovationists and the other heretics - **anathema**."

Again, Divine Providence convened a Council of the Catacomb Church in July, 1937, in the depths of Siberia:- "In the last days of July, 1937, in the Siberian town of Ust-Kut, on the River Lena (at its juncture with the River Kut), in the re-grouping section of the house of arrest, there met by chance: two Metropolitans, four Bishops, two Priests and six laymen of the secret Catacomb Church, who were on a stage of their journey from Vitim to Irkutsk, being sent from Irkutsk to the north.

"It was difficult to anticipate a similarly full and representative gathering of same-minded members of the Church in the near future. Therefore those who had gathered decided immediately to open a 'Sacred Council', in order to make canonical regulations concerning vital questions of the Catacomb Church. The time of the Council was, as it seemed, limited to four hours, after which the participants in the Council were sent in different directions.

“The president was Metropolitan John (in one version: “Bishop John”), and the Council chose the layman A.Z. to be secretary. The resolutions of the Council were not signed: A.Z. gave an oath to memorize the decisions of the Council and to pass on to whom it was necessary whatever he remembered exactly, but not to speak at all about what he confused or could not remember exactly. A.Z. in his time succeeded in passing on the memorised decisions of the Church. His words were written down and became Canons of the Church. Among these Canons were some that are especially necessary for the Church:

“1. The Sacred Council forbids the faithful to receive communion from the clergy legalized by the anti-Christian State.

“2. It has been revealed to the Sacred Council by the Spirit that the anathema-curse hurled by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon is valid, and all priests and Church-servers who have dared to consider it as an ecclesiastical mistake or political tactic are placed under its power and bound by it.

“3. To all those who discredit and separate themselves from the Sacred Council of 1917-18 – **Anathema!**

“4. All branches of the Church which are on the common trunk – the trunk is our pre-revolutionary Church – are living branches of the Church of Christ. We give our blessing to common prayer and the serving of the Divine Liturgy to all priests of these branches. The Sacred Council forbids all those who do not consider themselves to be branches, but independent from the tree of the Church, to serve the Divine Liturgy. The Sacred Council does not consider it necessary to have administrative unity of the branches of the Church, but unity of mind concerning the Church is binding on all.”

Thus Sergius was to be condemned, not only because he was a usurper of ecclesiastical authority (although he was that), nor because he violated the sacred canons (although he did that), but because he imposed on the Church an heretical attitude towards the antichristian authorities. As Hieromartyr Bishop Mark (Novoselov) said during interrogation: “I am an enemy of Soviet power – and what is more, by dint of my religious convictions, since Soviet power is an atheist power and even anti-theist. I believe that as a true Christian I cannot strengthen this power by any means... [There is] a petition which the Church has commanded to be used every day in certain well-known conditions... The purpose of this formula is to request the overthrow of the infidel power by God... But this formula does not amount to a summons to believers to take active measures, but only calls them to pray for the overthrow of the power that has fallen away from God.”

Again, in another catacomb document dating from the 1960s we read: “Authority is given by God in order to preserve and fulfil the law... But how

should one look on the Soviet authority, following the Apostolic teaching on authorities [Romans 13]? In accordance with the Apostolic teaching which we have set forth, one must acknowledge that the Soviet authority is not an authority. It is an anti-authority. It is not an authority because it is not established by God, but insolently created by an aggregation of the evil actions of men, and it is consolidated and supported by these actions. If the evil actions weaken, the Soviet authority, representing a condensation of evil, likewise weakens... This authority consolidates itself in order to destroy all religions, simply to eradicate faith in God. Its essence is warfare with God, because its root is from Satan. The Soviet authority is not authority, because by its nature it cannot fulfil the law, for the essence of its life is evil.

“It may be said that the Soviet authority, in condemning various crimes of men, can still be considered an authority. We do not say that a ruling authority is totally lacking. We only affirm that it is an anti-authority. One must know that the affirmation of real power is bound up with certain actions of men, to whom the instinct of preservation is natural. And they must take into consideration the laws of morality which have been inherent in mankind from ages past. But in essence this authority systematically commits murder physically and spiritually. In reality a hostile power acts, which is called Soviet authority. The enemy strives by cunning to compel humanity to acknowledge this power as an authority. But the Apostolic teaching on authority is inapplicable to it, just as evil is inapplicable to God and the good, because evil is outside God; but the enemies with hypocrisy can take refuge in the well-known saying that everything is from God. This Soviet anti-authority is precisely the collective Antichrist, warfare against God...”

### *Conclusion: The Cost of Sergianism*

Even patriarchal sources have spoken about the falsity of Sergius' declaration, the true confession of those who opposed him, and the invalidity of the measures he took to punish them. Thus: “Amidst the opponents of Metropolitan Sergius were a multitude of remarkable martyrs and confessors, bishops, monks, priests... The ‘canonical’ bans of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and his Synod were taken seriously by no one, neither at that time [the 1930s] nor later by dint of the uncanonicity of the situation of Metropolitan Sergius himself...” And again: “The particular tragedy of the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius consists in its principled rejection of the podvig of martyrdom and confession, without which witnessing to the truth is inconceivable. In this way Metropolitan Sergius took as his foundation not hope on the Providence of God, but a purely human approach to the resolution of church problems... The courage of the ‘catacombniks’ and their firmness of faith cannot be doubted, and it is our duty to preserve the memory of those whose names we shall probably learn only in eternity...”

If Metropolitan Sergius thought that his betrayal of the True Orthodox Christians would “save the Church”, the next few years would prove him terribly

wrong. From 1935 the Bolsheviks began to repress all the clergy, sergianist as well as True Orthodox. According to Russian government figures, in 1937 alone 136,900 clergy were arrested, of whom 106,800 were killed; while between 1917 and 1980, 200,000 clergy were executed and 500,000 others were imprisoned or sent to the camps. The rate of killing slowed down considerably in the following years. In 1939 900 clergy were killed, in 1940 – 1100, in 1941 – 1900, in 1943 – 500. In the period 1917 to 1940 205 Russian hierarchs “disappeared without trace”; 59 disappeared in 1937 alone. By 1939 there were only four bishops of the sergianist church at liberty, and only a tiny handful of churches open in the whole country...

The situation was no better with regard to churches. There were no churches at all in Belorussia (Kolarz), “less than a dozen” in Ukraine (Bociurkiw), and a total of 150-200 in the whole of Russia. In all, the numbers of functioning Orthodox churches declined from 54,692 in 1914 to 39,000 at the beginning of 1929 to 15, 835 on April 1, 1936.

And yet the census of 1937 established that one-third of city-dwellers and two-thirds of country-dwellers still confessed that they believed in God. Stalin’s plan that the Name of God should not be named in the country by the year 1937 had failed...

But what of the future? What hopes did the Christians of the Catacomb Church nurture with regard to a deliverance from their terrible sufferings? If some, like Bishop Maximus of Serpukhov, were pessimistic about the future, thinking that the very last days of the world had been reached, others prophesied the resurrection of Holy Russia before the end, such as Bishop Victor of Glazov. Eldress Agatha of Belorussia, who was starved to death by the authorities in 1939 at the age of 119, told her spiritual children concerning the Soviet Church: “This is not a true church. It has signed a contract to serve the Antichrist. Do not go to it. Do not receive any Mysteries from its servants. Do not participate in prayer with them.” And then she said: “There will come a time when churches will be opened in Russia, and the true Orthodox Faith will triumph. Then people will become baptized, as at one time they were baptized under St. Vladimir. When the churches are opened for the first time, do not go to them because these will not be true churches; but when they are opened the second time, then go – these will be the true churches. I will not live to see this time, but many of you will live to this time. The atheist Soviet authority will vanish, and all its servants will perish...”

However, the immediate outlook at the end of the thirties was bleak indeed. E.L., writing about Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene, comments: “He warmed the hearts of many, but the masses remained... passive and inert, moving in any direction in accordance with an external push, and not their inner convictions... The long isolation of Bishop Damascene from Soviet life, his remoteness from the gradual process of sovietization led him to an unrealistic assessment of the real relations of forces in the reality that surrounded him. Although he remained

unshaken himself, he did not see... the desolation of the human soul in the masses. This soul had been diverted onto another path – a slippery, opportunistic path which led people where the leaders of Soviet power – bold men who stopped at nothing in their attacks on all moral and material values – wanted them to go... Between the hierarchs and priests who had languished in the concentration camps and prisons, and the mass of the believers, however firmly they tried to stand in the faith, there grew an abyss of mutual incomprehension. The confessors strove to raise the believers onto a higher plane and bring their spiritual level closer to their own. The mass of believers, weighed down by the cares of life and family, blinded by propaganda, involuntarily went in the opposite direction, downwards. Visions of a future golden age of satiety, of complete liberty from all external and internal restrictions, of the submission of the forces of nature to man, deceitful perspectives in which fantasy passed for science... were used by the Bolsheviks to draw the overwhelming majority of the people into their nets. Only a few individuals were able to preserve a loftiness of spirit. This situation was exploited very well by Metropolitan Sergius..."

Sergius has had many apologists. Some have claimed that he "saved the Church" for a future generation, when the whirlwind of the persecution had passed. This claim cannot be justified, as we have seen. It was rather the Catacomb Church, which, as Alexeyev writes, "in a sense saved the official Church from complete destruction because the Soviet authorities were afraid to force the entire Russian Church underground through ruthless suppression and so to lose control over it." As St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco wrote: "The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius brought no benefit to the Church. The persecutions not only did not cease, but sharply increased. To the number of other accusations brought by the Soviet regime against clergy and laymen, one more was added – non-recognition of the Declaration. At the same time, a wave of church closings rolled over all Russia... Concentration camps and places of forced labor held thousands of clergymen, a significant part of whom never saw freedom again, being executed there or dying from excessive labors and deprivations."

Others have tried to justify Sergius by claiming that there are two paths to salvation, one through open confession or the descent into the catacombs, and the other through compromise. Sergius, according to this view, was no less a martyr than the Catacomb martyrs, only he suffered the martyrdom of losing his good name. However, this view comes close to the "Rasputinite" heresy that there can be salvation through sin – in this case, the most brazen lying, the sacrifice of the freedom and dignity of the Church and Orthodoxy, and the betrayal to torments and death of one's fellow Christians! Thus Hieromartyr Sergius Mechev was betrayed by "Bishop" Manuel Lemeshevsky. And more generally, Metropolitan Sergius' charge that all the catacomb bishops were "counter-revolutionaries" was sufficient to send them to their deaths.

Sergianists are constantly trying to prove that the declaration of Metropolitan



Sergius, though disastrous for the Church, was nevertheless motivated by the purest of feelings. Apart from the inherent improbability that an action motivated by the purest of feelings - and therefore inspired by the Grace of God - would bring disaster, both physical and spiritual, to thousands, if not millions of people, we have seen that Sergius was an opportunist from the beginning, from well before the revolution.

Further proof of this is provided in the *Memoirs* of Princess Natalya Vladimirovna Urusova: "The personality of Metropolitan Sergius was of the basest, crawling before the authorities. Many people asked each other: 'Does Metropolitan Sergius really take part in the persecutions and the destruction of churches?' Some did not admit that he took an active part in this, but, unfortunately, they were wrong. He completely sold himself to satan. I can cite a case personally known to me which confirms the fact of his participation in these works.

"In the church of St. Nicholas the Big Cross there chanted in the choir a young girl, very humble and nice. The whole of her family was religious, and consequently did not recognize the sergianist church. We got to know each other, and I and Andryusha would often go to their dacha near Moscow. Verochka worked in the main post office in Moscow, she was welcoming and good-looking. Once there came to her department on service matters a GPU boss. He was attracted to her and began to talk with her. To her horror and that of her family, he asked for their address. Unexpectedly he came to the dacha, thoroughly frightening everyone, of course. After all, it was impossible ever to know the intentions of these terrible people. Having said hello, he brought out a box of pastries, which no simple mortal could get at that time, and gave it to Verochka, asking her to accept him as a guest. He began to come often and to court her. Probably everyone was quietly and secretly crossing themselves, praying to be delivered from this guest. But there was nothing to be done. He looked about 30, with quite an interesting appearance. Almost immediately they set off on a walk without Verochka's father and mother, while Andryusha and I hurried to leave. Verochka said that she could have liked him, but the single thought that he was not only the boss of a GPU department, but, as he himself said, in charge of Church affairs, repulsed and horrified her. He proposed to her. She refused. 'How can I be your wife, when you are not only not a believer, but a persecutor of the Church, and I can never under any circumstances agree with that.' During their conversations he tried by every means to draw her away from faith in God, but she was unbending, the more so in that she was one of the beloved spiritual children of the murdered Fr. Alexander. He did not give up, but threatened to shoot her and himself. Moreover, he once even got out his revolver and pointed it at her. He continued to visit her. The family's situation was terrible. They couldn't think of sleeping or eating. They spoke only about one thing: how it would all end, with his taking revenge or his leaving them in peace? Verochka rushed around like a trapped bird trying to extricate herself from the claws of a hawk. Once when she was working (at the post office) she was summoned and given a

note to go immediately to the GPU at the Lubyanka... It turned out to be his office. He ordered her to take up the telephone receiver. Then he took up another and summoned Metropolitan Sergius. "Listen to the conversation," he told her. The conversation was about the destruction of one of the churches in Moscow. Sergius not only did not register any protest, but took part in this terrible affair and gave his agreement. "Did you hear?" said the boss. "That's the kind of clergy you bow down to." She replied that this conversation could not shake her faith in God, and that even before she had not recognized Metropolitan Sergius, while now she was convinced that she had not been mistaken about him... "

Sergius made the basic mistake of forgetting that it is God, not man, Who saves the Church. This mistake almost amounts to a loss of faith in the Providence and Omnipotence of God Himself. The faith that saves is the faith that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19.26). It is the faith that cries: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God" (Psalms 19.7). This was and is the faith of the Catacomb Church, which, being founded on "the Rock, which is Christ" (I Corinthians 10.7), has prevailed against the gates of hell.

But Sergius' "faith" was of a different, more "supple" kind, the kind of which the Prophet spoke: "Because you have said, 'We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we have an agreement; when the overwhelming scourge passes through it will not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter'; therefore thus says the Lord God,... hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter. Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with hell will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through you will be beaten down by it..." (Isaiah 28.15, 17-19)

A Catacomb Appeal of the period wrote: "May this article drop a word that will be as a burning spark in the heart of every person who has Divinity in himself and faith in our One Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Beloved brethren! Orthodox Christians, peace-makers! Do not forget your brothers who are suffering in cells and prisons for the word of God and for the faith, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, for they are in terrible dark bonds which have been built as tombs for all innocent people. Thousands and thousands of peace-loving brothers are languishing, buried alive in these tombs, these cemeteries; their bodies are wasting away and their souls are in pain every day and every hour, nor is there one minute of consolation, they are doomed to death and a hopeless life. These are the little brothers of Christ, they bear that cross which the Lord bore. Jesus Christ received suffering and death and was buried in the tomb, sealed by a stone and guarded by a watch. The hour came when death could not hold in its bonds the body of Christ that had suffered, for an Angel of the Lord coming down from the heavens rolled away the stone from the tomb and the soldiers who had been on guard fled in great fear. The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. But the thunder will also strike these castles where the

brothers languish for the word of God, and will smash the bolts where death threatens men..."

*May 19 / June 1, 2012.  
Apodosis of the Ascension of the Lord.*

## **23. HOW THE MP FELL UNDER THE 1983 ANATHEMA**

The founder of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) is usually considered to be the founder of the first of the two major heresies of the MP, Sergianism, but not of the second, Ecumenism. This is broadly correct, because, although we find ecumenist statements among his works<sup>281</sup>, Sergius did not receive any instructions from his communist masters to enter the ecumenical movement. It was only during the time of his successors, Alexis I (Simansky) and Pimev (Izvekov), when political conditions had changed and the communist party sought to infiltrate and use the ecumenical purpose for its own ends, that we find Sergianism compounded by the apostasy from the Orthodox Faith that constitutes the “pan-heresy” of ecumenism.

### **1. False Moscow Councils**

After the Second World War, and even before its end, the Soviet Communist Party, and therefore the Sovietized MP, planned to draw the other Orthodox Churches into the MP’s orbit. And so in January, 1945, a council was convened in Moscow, consisting of four Russian metropolitans, 41 bishops and 141 representatives of the clergy and laity. Also present were the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Georgia, and representatives of the Constantinopolitan, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serbian and other Churches. In all there were 204 participants.

“A significant amount of money,” writes S. Shumilo, “was set apart by Stalin for its preparation. The best hotels of the capital, the “Metropole” and “National” were placed at the disposal of the participants of the council gratis, as well as Kremlin government food reserves, government “ZIS” automobiles, a large government house with all modern conveniences and much else. Stalin was also concerned about the arrival in the USSR of representatives of foreign churches, so as to give an international significance to the given action. As V. Alexeyev notes: ‘... .. By having a local council Stalin forestalled possible new accusations of the council’s lack of competency and representativeness, etc. for the election of a patriarch from the foreign part of the Orthodoxy clergy... So that the very fact of the election of a new patriarch should not elicit doubts, the patriarchs of the Orthodox churches and their representatives from Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and the Middle East were invited for the first time to Moscow.’ And although in the actual council only three patriarchs – those of Georgia, Alexandria and Antioch – took part,

---

<sup>281</sup> Thus in his article, “The Relationship of an Orthodox Person to his Church and to the Heterodox” (*Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), 1993, N 3) he wrote: “Outside the Church one does *not* find an immediate darkness between the Church and the heretical communities. Rather, there is found a partial shadow, which in its own way falls upon the schismatics and the self-willed (heretics). These two groups cannot be in the strict sense considered strangers to the Church nor completely torn away from Her.”

representatives from other local churches also arrived; they were specially brought to Moscow by Soviet military aeroplanes.

"The council opened on January 31, 1945 with a speech of welcome in the name of the Soviet Stalinist regime by the president of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, NKVD Major-General G. Karpov. He noted that the council 'was an outstanding event in the life of the Church', whose activity was directed 'towards helping the Soviet people to secure the great historical aims set before it', that is, the construction of 'communist society'.

"In its turn the council did not miss the opportunity yet again to express its gratitude and assure the communist party, the government and Stalin personally of its sincere devotion. As the address put it: 'The Council profoundly appreciates the trusting, and to the highest degree benevolent and attentive attitude towards all church undertakings on the part of the state authorities... and expresses to our Government our sincerely grateful feelings'.

"As was planned, the sole candidate as the new Soviet patriarch was unanimously confirmed at the council – Metropolitan Alexis (Simansky). Besides this, a new 'Temporary Statute for the Administration of the Russian Orthodox Church', composed by workers at the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and the chancellor of the MP, Protopriest Nicholas Kolchitsky, was accepted at the council. This Statute radically contradicted the canonical principles of Orthodoxy. 'This Statute turned the Moscow patriarchate into a certain likeness of a totalitarian structure, in which three people at the head with the so-called "patriarch of Moscow and all Rus"' received greater power than a local council, and the right to administer the Church in a still more dictatorial fashion than Peter's synod. But if the emperors up to 1917 were nevertheless considered to be Orthodox Christians, now the official structures of the Church were absolutely subject to the will of the leaders of the God-fighting regime. Church history has not seen such a fall in 2000 years of Christianity!' By accepting in 1945 the new Statute on the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church that contradicted from the first to the last letter the conciliar-canonical principles of the administration of the Church confirmed at the All-Russian Local Church Council of 1917-1918, the Moscow patriarchate once more confirmed its own Soviet path of origin and development, and also the absence of any kind of link or descent from the canonical 'Tikhonite' Church, which legally existed in the country until 1927."<sup>282</sup>

---

<sup>282</sup> Shumilo, "Sovetskij Rezhim i 'Sovetskaja Tserkov'" v 40-e-50-e gody XX stoletia" (The Soviet Regime and the 'Soviet Church' in the 40s and 50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=678> ®.

The MP, having meekly submitted to the rule of the totalitarian dictator Stalin, was now in effect a totalitarian organization itself. All decisions in the Church depended effectively on the single will of the patriarch, and through him, of Stalin. For, as Fr. Sergius Gordun has written: "For decades the position of the Church was such that the voice of the clergy and laity could not be heard. In accordance with the document accepted by the Local Council of 1945, in questions requiring the agreement of the government of the USSR, the patriarch would confer with the Council for the Affairs of the Orthodox Church attached to the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. The Statute did not even sketchily outline the range of questions in which the patriarch was bound to agree with the Council, which gave the latter the ability to exert unlimited control over church life."<sup>283</sup>

The power over the Church that the 1945 council gave to the atheists was revealed in the secret 1974 Furov report of the Council for Religious Affairs to the Central Committee: "The Synod is under the control of the Council for Religious Affairs. The question of the selection and placing of its permanent members was and remains completely in the hands of the Council, and the candidature of the non-permanent members is also agreed beforehand with responsible members of the Council. All issues which are to be discussed at the Synod are first discussed by Patriarch Pimen and the permanent members of the Synod with the leaders of the Council and in its departments, and the final 'Decisions of the Holy Synod' are also agreed."<sup>284</sup>

After the enthronement of Alexis (on February 4), writes V. Alexeyev, Stalin ordered the Council to congratulate Alexis on his election and to give him "a commemorative present. The value of the gift was determined at 25-30,000 rubles. Stalin loved to give valuable presents. It was also decided to 'show gratitude' to the foreign bishops for their participation in the Council. The commissariat was told to hand over 42 objects from the depositories of the Moscow museums and 28 from the Zagorsk state museum - mainly objects used in Orthodox worship - which were used as gifts for the Eastern Patriarchs. Thus, for example, Patriarch Christopher of Alexandria was given a golden panagia with valuable stones... Naturally, the patriarchs were expected to reciprocate, and they hastened to express the main thing - praise... Patriarch Christopher of Alexandria said: 'Marshal Stalin,... under whose leadership the military operations have been conducted on an unprecedented scale, has for this purpose an abundance of divine grace and blessing.'"<sup>285</sup>

---

<sup>283</sup> Fr. Sergius Gordun, "Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' pri Svyateishikh Patriarkhakh Sergii i Aleksii" (The Russian Orthodox Church under their Holinesses Patriarchs Sergius and Alexis), *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia (Herald of the Russian Christian Movement)*, vol. 158, I-1990, p. 94.

<sup>284</sup> Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church*, London: Croom Helm, 1986, p. 215.

<sup>285</sup> Alexeyev, "Marshal Stalin doveriaet Tserkvi" (Marshal Stalin trusts the Church), *Agitator*, N 10, 1989, pp. 27-28.

As was to be expected, the Eastern Patriarchs recognised the canonicity of the election, “hastening,” as Shumilo says, “to assure themselves of the support of the head of the biggest and wealthiest patriarchate, which now, moreover, had acquired ‘the clemency [appropriate to] a great power’”.<sup>286</sup>

The price the Eastern Patriarchs paid for the favour of this “great power” was an agreement to break communion with ROCOR. As Karpov reported: “The Council was a clear proof of the absence of religion in the USSR [!] and also had a certain political significance. The Moscow Patriarchate in particular agreed with Patriarch Christopher of Alexandria and with the representatives of the Constantinople and Jerusalem patriarchates to break links with Metropolitan Anastasy, and on the necessity of a joint struggle against the Vatican.”<sup>287</sup>

In 1948 the World Council of Churches was founded. Seeing this as an important outpost of Anglo-American power, the Bolsheviks at first tried to mock it and remove all Orthodox participation in it. And so another “Pan-Orthodox” council was convened in Moscow in July, 1948, just before the First General Assembly of the WCC. This was preceded by a celebration of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Moscow Patriarchate that was attended by representatives of the Ecumenical, Antiochian, Alexandrian, Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Polish and Georgian Churches. (The Georgian Church had been granted autocephaly by Moscow shortly after the Stalin-Sergius pact in 1943. This act was not recognised by Constantinople until the 1990s.) Only Jerusalem, ROCOR and the True Orthodox Churches of Russia, Greece and Romania were not represented.

When Karpov, the real leader of the Council, learned that Metropolitan Germanus of Thyateira and Great Britain was not arriving in Moscow until after the working days of the Council, he said that “he is well-known to be an English spy”. And about Patriarch Maximus, who had given Metropolitan Germanus this order, he said: “he has long been ill with schizophrenia and must in the near future go into retirement”.<sup>288</sup>

At the council that took place after the celebrations, only the Churches within Moscow’s orbit and Antioch attended; the others boycotted it, ostensibly on the grounds that only Constantinople had the right to call such a conference, but more probably because they did not wish to involve themselves in the inevitable adulations of Stalin.<sup>289</sup>

---

<sup>286</sup> Shumilo, *op. cit.*

<sup>287</sup> RTsKhIDNI.F.17.Op.132.D.111.L.27; Monk Benjamin, “Letopis’ Tserkovnykh Sobytij” (Chronicle of Church Events), <http://www.zlatoust.ws/letopis3.htm>, vol. 3, p. 81.

<sup>288</sup> RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 132, d. 8, l. 30; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, vol. 3, p. 128.

<sup>289</sup> Bishop Ambrose of Methone, personal communication, November 5, 2005.

The council, in line with Stalin's foreign policy, denounced the West and the Vatican and condemned the ecumenical movement, which had received a new lease of life at the First General Assembly of the World Council of Churches which was taking place in Amsterdam in the same month.<sup>290</sup>

Moscow's hostility to the Vatican was determined especially by its determination to eliminate uniatism in Eastern Europe – that is, churches serving according to the Eastern Orthodox rite but commemorating the Pope. A start had been made already towards the end of the war, when it was suggested to the uniate episcopate in Western Ukraine that it simply "liquidate itself". When all five uniate bishops refused, in April, 1945, they were arrested.

Within a month a clearly Soviet-inspired "initiative movement" for unification with the MP headed by Protopresbyter G. Kostelnikov appeared.<sup>291</sup> By the spring of 1946 997 out of 1270 uniate priests in Western Ukraine had joined this movement, on March 8-10 a uniate council of clergy and laity voted to join the Orthodox church and annul the Brest unia with the Roman Catholic Church of 1596. Central Committee documents show that the whole procedure was controlled by the first secretary of the Ukrainian party, Nikita Khrushchev, who in all significant details sought the sanction of Stalin.<sup>292</sup>

In October, 1948 the 1,250,000 uniates of Romania (The Romanian unia had taken place at Blaj in Transylvania in 1697) were united with the Romanian Patriarchate.<sup>293</sup> And in April, 1950, a council took place at Prešov in Slovakia attended by 820 delegates, at which it was agreed to revoke the Uzhgorod unia of 1649 and return to Orthodoxy. The "converted" uniates formed a new, East Slovakian diocese of the Czech Orthodox Church.<sup>294</sup>

However, as Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia writes, the merger of the uniates infected the MP, which drew a large proportion of its clergy from the Western Ukraine, with the false asceticism and mysticism of the Catholics. And the uniates, "on being merged into the unorthodox patriarchate, did not come to know the grace-filled 'taste of True Orthodoxy'. The fruits of this 'union' are well known to all today."<sup>295</sup>

---

<sup>290</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 128-131.

<sup>291</sup> M.V. Shkarovsky; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 81.

<sup>292</sup> M.V. Shkarovsky; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 105-106.

<sup>293</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 137-138.

<sup>294</sup> K.E. Skurat, *Istoria Pomestnykh Pravoslavnykh Tserkvej* (A History of the Local Orthodox Churches); Monk Benjamin, "Letopis' Tserkovnykh Sobytij" (Chronicle of Church Events) <http://www.zlatoust.ws/letopis4.htm>, part 4, p. 2.

<sup>295</sup> Metropolitan Tikhon, "Tiazhkij Iudin grekh pered vsem Russkim narodom" (The terrible sin of Judas before the whole Russian people), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=779>.



It is now known that all the decisions of the Moscow council of 1948 were planned a year and a half before by the Central Committee of the Communist Party.<sup>296</sup> Consequently it is not surprising to see from the hierarchs' special epistle that their motives were purely political: "The world is going through a stormy time in which the irreconcilable differences between the Catholic and rationalist-Protestant West, on the one hand, and the Orthodox East, on the other, are clearly manifest... We servants of the Orthodox Church have been painfully impressed by the fact that those who are stirring up a new war are children of the Christian Catholic and Protestant world. We are deeply grieved that from the stronghold of Catholicism, the Vatican, and the nest of Protestantism, America, instead of the voice of peace and Christian love we hear blessing of a new war and hymns in praise of atomic bombs and such-like inventions, which are designed for the destruction of human life. All Christians, regardless of nation and creed, cannot help blaming the Vatican for this policy. We fervently beseech the Chief Pastor, our Lord Jesus Christ, that He enlighten the Catholic hierarchy with the light of His Divine teaching and help it to realize the abyss of its sinful fall."<sup>297</sup>

The most theological contribution to this council came from Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) of Boguchar (Bulgaria), formerly of ROCOR. He prepared three reports: against the ecumenical movement, on the old and new calendars, and on the Anglican hierarchy. Seraphim expressed a "particular opinion" on the calendar question, considering the council's resolution on this question to have been inadequate. In his report against Ecumenism he stressed that the presence of Orthodox representatives at ecumenical conferences, even as observers, constituted apostasy from Holy Orthodoxy.

Protopriest G. Razumovsky also spoke well: "The Russian Orthodox Church," he said, "had always taught and still teaches that Pentecost, or the descent of the Holy Spirit, has already taken place and that the Christians do not have to wait for a new appearance of the Holy Spirit, but the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The diminution of the significance of the single sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the prophecy of a future 'third hour', in which the expected Kingdom of the Holy Spirit will be revealed is characteristic of the teaching of the Masons and the heretics; while the newly revealed prophecy of the expected Ecumenical Pentecost can be nothing other than an old echo of the false teaching of these deceived heretics."<sup>298</sup>

---

<sup>296</sup> Documents in M. Shkarovskij, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' i Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo s 1943 po 1964 gg.* (The Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet State from 1943 to 1964).

<sup>297</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), 1948, N 12, p. 6; cited in Yakunin, "V sluzhenii k kul'tu (Moskovskaia Patriarkhia i kul't lichnosti Stalina)" (In the Service of the Cult (the Moscow Patriarchate and Stalin's Cult of Personality), in Furman, D.E., Fr. Mark Smirnov (eds.), *Na puti k svobode sovesti* (On the Path to Freedom of Conscience), Moscow: Progress, 1989, p. 197.

<sup>298</sup> Archimandrite Charalampus Vasilopoulos, *Oikoumenismos khoris maska* (Ecumenism Unmasked), Athens: Orthodoxos Typos, 1988, p. 122 (in Greek).

On July 15, 1948 a feast in honour of the participants in the Council was laid on by the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church. About 200 people were present. The representative of the Bulgarian Church proposed a toast to Stalin for the communist Prime Minister of Bulgaria. Karpov declared that the guests had become personally convinced in Moscow that the Russian Orthodox Church was completely free and independent of the State. Metropolitan Germanos of Thyateira praised Stalin and called Karpov a minister who "aids the strengthening and flourishing of Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union". Metropolitan Elias of the Lebanon said that it was only thanks to Stalin that the flourishing of the Russian Orthodox Church had been guaranteed throughout the world.<sup>299</sup>

In July, 1951 the heads of the Churches of Antioch, Russia, Georgia, Romania and Bulgaria gathered in Zagorsk and issued a purely political statement in favour of "peace" and against the USA.<sup>300</sup> The "theology of peace" – that is, the removal of all obstacles to the communist domination of the world – was becoming the major content of top-level ecclesiastical meetings in the eastern bloc. For the moment pro-communism was combined with anti-ecumenism (since the initiators of the ecumenical movement were the Anglo-Saxons); but the time would shortly come when the communist masters of the East European Churches would compel the patriarchs to change course and embrace ecumenism – for the sake of giving their pro-communist message a wider audience and deeper penetration...

## 2. The Communists Become Ecumenists

Since the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948, it had been the Ecumenical Patriarchate that had made the running in ecumenism among the Orthodox. However, in 1959 the MP sent its representative, Metropolitan Nicholas of Krutitsa, to the Orthodox consultation proposed by the Faith and Order Committee near Athens. This indicated that the communists had changed their minds about ecumenism, and decided that the Bolsheviks' cause would be best served, not by boycotting it, but by joining it.

This change of mind was partly the result of the fact that, as Fr. Georges Florovsky lamented, from the time of the Evanston conference a progressive takeover took place of the "Faith and Order" concerns by the "Life and Work" concerns.<sup>301</sup> That is, of the two strands of ecumenical activity that had existed before the war – the resolving of dogmatic differences among Christians, and "concern for the world and its problems" – it was the latter that was becoming dominant. And this was of great interest to the communists.

---

<sup>299</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 133.

<sup>300</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), N 8, 1951; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 4, pp. 12-13.

<sup>301</sup> Andrew Blane (ed.), *Georges Florovsky*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993, p. 122.

We have seen that, as late as the Moscow council of 1948, the MP, in obedience to its communist masters, had adopted an anti-western and anti-ecumenical position. However, this position began to change in the late 1950s, when the MP began to be pushed into joining the WCC by the Council for Religious Affairs. Thus on January 16, 1958, Metropolitan Nicholas asked the Council how he was to reply to the suggestion of the WCC general secretary that he meet representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church. Comrade Karpov, head of the Council for Religious Affairs, said that he should reply that they in principle agreed to a meeting in June-July of that year.

On May 13 Metropolitan Nicholas asserted that “in the last ten years, thanks to the participation of some Orthodox Churches and the non-participation of others in the ecumenical movement, significant changes have taken place witnessing to its evolution towards churchness [*tserkovnosti*]. Very indicative in this respect have been huge movements in the sphere of German Protestant theology revealing the mystical depths of Orthodoxy and overcoming its traditional rationalism... On coming into contact with our ecclesiastical life, many actors in the ecumenical movement have completely changed their idea of Orthodoxy... Evidently approving of the declaration of the Orthodox participants in the Evanston assembly, we agree to a meeting with the leaders of the World Council of Churches exclusively in the name of our Pan-Orthodox duty – to serve the reunification of all Christians in the bosom of the Church of Christ.”<sup>302</sup>

In 1959, as a sign of the changing times, the MP joined the European Conference of Churches as a founding member... Then, on June 15, 1960 the new head of the Council for Religious Affairs, Kuroyedov met Patriarch Alexis. As Fr. Sergius Gordun writes, “Kuroyedov declared that he had carefully studied the external activities of the Patriarchate and he had come to conclusion that the situation was quite unsatisfactory. ‘In recent years the Patriarchate has not undertaken a single major initiative for the unification of the Orthodox Churches around the Russian Orthodox Church headed by the Moscow Patriarchate – initiatives, that is, aimed at exposing the reactionary activities of the Pope of Rome and the intensification of the struggle for peace. The Patriarchate is not using those huge opportunities which she enjoys; she has not undertaken a single major action abroad... The Russian Orthodox Church is not emerging as a unifying centre for the Orthodox Churches of the world, usually she adopts a passive stance and only weakly exposes the slanderous propaganda concerning the position of religion and the Church in our country... The Council recommended to Metropolitan Nicholas that he work out suggestions for intensifying external work. However, Metropolitan Nicholas has not fulfilled this request of the Council and has put forward suggestions which in no way correspond to the requirements discussed with

---

<sup>302</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), 1958, N 6; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 4, p. 30.

the metropolitan in this regard.’ Then Kuroyedov suggested that Metropolitan Nicholas be released from his duties as president of the Department of Foreign Relations and that they be imposed on another, more fitting person.”

The “suggestion” was accepted, and Metropolitan Nicholas was retired on June 21. In July, he asked Archbishop Basil (Krivoshein) of Brussels to tell the world that a new persecution was beginning, and in August repeated this message to other western church leaders. At the end of August, Kuroyedov suggested to the patriarch that he retire Metropolitan Nicholas from administering the Moscow diocese. The patriarch suggested to the metropolitan that he accept the Leningrad diocese, but the latter sharply rejected the offer. On September 9, Metropolitan Nicholas sent a letter to Khrushchev (there was no reply). On September 19, the MP Synod retired him. On December 13 he died in suspicious circumstances; many believe he was murdered.<sup>303</sup>

Some believe that Metropolitan Nicholas was removed because in 1959 KGB defector Major Peter Deriabin had exposed him before a U.S. Senate Subcommittee as a KGB agent<sup>304</sup>, and so he had to be replaced. There is no doubt that he was an agent, as we have seen; but it also appears likely that he sincerely wanted to protect the Church. In any case, his career is yet another illustration of the Lord’s words that one cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon...

The new foreign relations supremo turned out to be Bishop Nicodemus (Rotov), who was born in 1929, made priest at the extraordinarily young age of 20, and Bishop of Podolsk on July 10, 1960, at the age of 31.

Fr. Sergius continues: “The personality of Archimandrite Nicodemus (Rotov), later Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, is linked with the change in the position of the Moscow Patriarchate in relation to the ecumenical movement. As is well known, the Conference of the heads and representatives of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, which took place in Moscow in 1948, accepted a resolution declaring that ‘the aims of the ecumenical movement... do not correspond to the ideals of Christianity and the tasks of the Church of Christ as those are understood by the Orthodox

---

<sup>303</sup> "Nekotorie Stranitsy Biografii Mitropolita Nikolaia (Yarushevicha)" (Some Pages from the Biography of Metropolitan Nicholas (Yarushevich), *Vertograd-Inform*, NN 7-9 (16-18), 1996, pp. 16-17; Christopher Andrew and Vasily Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive*, London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1999, p. 636.

<sup>304</sup> Deriabin, who served in the Kremlin Guard Directorate and then as Rezident in charge of espionage in Vienna, testified that “every priest is an agent of the secret police. Even the second ranking official in the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow [Metropolitan Nicholas] is an agent” (*Chronicle-Telegraph* of Elyria, Ohio, July 20, 1961; in Vladimir Kozyreff, “Re: [paradosis] Happiness and successes – and Bishop Meletieff”, [orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com), January 19, 2006.

Church'. In this connection particular mention was made of the ecumenical movement's turn towards involvement in social and political life, which was not acceptable for Orthodoxy. This position was maintained by the Moscow Patriarchate until 1960. In a conversation which took place on April 2, 1959, his Holiness Patriarch Alexis informed the Council about the attitude of the Russian Church to the ecumenical movement, and declared that she intended gradually to increase her links with the World Council of Churches and to send her observers to its most important conferences, but would not become a member of this organization. However, a year and a half later this position changed. In the notes of a conversation which took place between Patriarch Alexis and V.A. Kuroyedov on September 15, 1960, there is the following phrase: 'The Patriarch accepted the recommendation of the Council concerning the entry of the Russian Orthodox Church into the membership of the World Council of Churches and evaluated this as a major action of the Russian Orthodox Church in its activities abroad.' What was the aim of the Council for the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church in recommending that the Russian Church enter the World Council of Churches? To conceal, it would seem, the anti-ecclesiastical policy of the Soviet government. Having cornered the Church, the Council wanted to create the image of a free and active Russian Church abroad..."<sup>305</sup>

Certainly, a new anti-ecclesiastical policy, the so-called "Khrushchev persecution" was in the making, and therefore needed masking.

In November-December, 1960 Patriarchs Alexis and Athenagoras met in Constantinople, and discussed questions related to the Second Vatican Council. After their meeting Bishop Nicodemus, now president of the MP's Department of External Relations, gave a press conference at which he said: "The Russian Church has no intention to take part in the Council, since the union between Orthodoxy and Catholicism cannot take place unless the Vatican renounces from the beginning certain principles – for example, the infallibility of the Pope; and unless it accepts the dogmatic reforms accomplished in the Orthodox Church."<sup>306</sup>

Meanwhile, the pressure on the Church inside the Soviet Union was increasing. On March 16, 1961 the Council of Ministers passed a resolution "On the strengthening of control for the fulfilment of the legislation on churches", which gave power to the local authorities to close churches and remove registrations.

On March 30 the MP Synod resolved "to consider the entry of the Russian Orthodox Church into the World Council of Churches to be timely, and to ask his Holiness the Patriarch to send a letter to the General Secretary of the

---

<sup>305</sup> Gordun, *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 133, 134.

<sup>306</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 4, p. 42.

World Council of Churches declaring the desire of the Russian Orthodox Church to become a member of the World Council of Churches."<sup>307</sup>

From September 24 to October 1 the Orthodox Churches in the WCC met on Rhodes under the presidency of Metropolitan Chrysostom of Athens. One of its participants, Archbishop Basil of Brussels, recalls that "the relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world were reviewed in detail. With regard to the Catholic Church, the majority of participants in the conference expressed themselves 'for the development of relations in the spirit of the love of Christ, with particular reference to the points envisaged by the 1920 encyclical of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.'"<sup>308</sup>

Also discussed was a catalogue of topics for a future Pan-Orthodox Council. This was used by the MP as a way of ensuring that no topic that might prove embarrassing to the Soviet government would be discussed. For, as Gordienko and Novikov write, "in the course of the debate on the catalogue, the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation [led by Archbishop Nicodemus] suggested the removal of some of the subjects (The Development of Internal and External Missionary Work, The Methods of Fighting Atheism and False Doctrines Like Theosophy, Spiritism, Freemasonry, etc.) and the addition of some others (Cooperation between the Local Orthodox Churches in the Realisation of the Christian Ideas of Peace, Fraternity and Love among Peoples, Orthodoxy and Racial Discrimination, Orthodoxy and the Tasks of Christians in Regions of Rapid Social Change)... Besides working out the topics for the future Pre-Council, the First Conference passed the decision 'On the Study of Ways for Achieving Closer Contacts and Unity of Churches in a Pan-Orthodox Perspective', envisaging the search for contacts with Ancient Eastern (non-Chalcedonian) Churches (Monophysites), the Old Catholic, Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant Churches, as well as the World Council of Churches."<sup>309</sup>

In other words, the Orthodox were to abandon the struggle against Atheism, Freemasonry and other false religions, and were to engage in dialogue towards union with all the Christian heretics – while at the same time persecuting the True Orthodox and using ecumenical forums to further the ends of Soviet foreign policy in its struggle with the Capitalist West!<sup>310</sup>

The argument used by Nicodemus for removing atheism from the agenda was that discussion of this question might elicit persecution against the Church in Russia. As for Masonry, "it does not exist in contemporary Russia,

---

<sup>307</sup> Monk Benjamin, "Letopis' Tserkovnoj Istorii (1961-1971)" (A Chronicle of Church History (1961-1971), <http://www.zlatoust.ws/letopis5.htm>, p. 1.

<sup>308</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, p. 3.

<sup>309</sup> "The Russian Orthodox Church in the System of Contemporary Christianity", in A. Preobrazhensky (ed.), *The Russian Orthodox Church*, Moscow: Progress, 1988, p. 387.

<sup>310</sup> See William C. Fletcher, *Religion and Soviet Foreign Policy, 1945-1970*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, chapter 9.

we don't know it, Masonry exists only in the West. Consequently, this question is not of general, but only of local Orthodox interest, and for that reason it should not be included in the programme of a general Orthodox Council..."<sup>311</sup>

In November, 1961 Archbishop Nicodemus, accompanied by Bishop Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh and "a Russian government courier who is responsible for their comfort and all their expenses"<sup>312</sup>, went to New Delhi for the Third General Assembly of the WCC. On December 6-7, the MP was accepted as an official member of the WCC at its Third General Assembly in New Delhi. 142 churches voted for, 4 abstained and 3 voted against. The Vatican immediately issued a warning that the MP's membership was aimed "at the fulfilling of plans hatched in the Kremlin, which are bound to assist the triumph of Soviet propaganda through ecumenical Christianity". And sure enough, during the Assembly, when an attempt was made to condemn communism, Archbishop Nicodemus immediately proposed a resolution listing the vices of capitalism, as a result of which both resolutions were withdrawn.<sup>313</sup>

The KGB-enforced entry of the MP into the WCC, which was followed by the entry of the Romanian Church (in 1961) and of the Georgian Church (in 1962), had a devastating effect on the Orthodox position. For the Soviets not only constituted numerically by far the largest single Church in the WCC; they also controlled, through the KGB, all the other delegates from behind the iron curtain. Communism and Ecumenism therefore met in an unholy union which has been called "Ecucommunism".<sup>314</sup> As Deacon Andrew Kuraiev writes: "Sergianism and Ecumenism intertwined. It was precisely on the instructions of the authorities that our hierarchy conducted its ecumenical activity, and it was precisely in the course of their work abroad that clergy who had been enrolled into the KGB were checked out for loyalty."<sup>315</sup>

The Orthodox delegates at New Delhi signed a summary statement which declared, among other things: "We consider that the work of creating the One, Universal Church must unfailingly be accompanied by the destruction and disappearance of certain outmoded, traditional forms of worship". The idea of "creating" the One Church was blasphemous, and the idea of destroying certain "outmoded" forms of worship - an outright challenge to the Holy Tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church!

---

<sup>311</sup> Archbishop Basil of Brussels, *Vospominania* (Reminiscences); Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, pp. 3-4.

<sup>312</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* (London), November 22, 1961.

<sup>313</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, p. 5.

<sup>314</sup> V. Moss, "Ecucommunism", *Living Orthodoxy*, September-October, 1989, vol. XI, N 5, pp. 13-18.

<sup>315</sup> Kuraiev, "Vo dni pechal'nie Velikago posta" (During the Sad Days of the Great Fast), *Den' (Day)*, N 13, March 29 / April 4, 1992.

In 1968 the Fourth General Assembly of the WCC took place in Uppsala. Patriarch German of Serbia was one of the six presidents, and remained in that post for the next ten years. Uppsala considerably furthered the ecumenical movement. The Orthodox, as the new general secretary Carson Blake joyfully pointed out, were now taking full part in all the sections and committees and not, as often in the past, issuing separate statements disagreeing with the majority Protestant view.

Now only ROCOR, the Russian Catacomb Church and the Greek and Romanian Old Calendarists stood in the way of the complete triumph of Ecumenism. It was time for this last remnant of the True Church of Christ to renounce all hesitations, all false hopes, all temptations to compromise in the face of the completely unambiguous apostasy of the official churches of "World Orthodoxy". It was time to declare that Ecumenism was not simply uncanonical, but heresy, and not simply heresy, but "the heresy of heresies".

This definition came in a report that Archbishop Vitaly (Ustinov) of Canada gave to the Synod of ROCOR on the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC: "At the opening of the Assembly an ecumenical prayer was read in the name of all those assembles: 'O God our Father, You can create everything anew. We entrust ourselves to You, help us to live for others, for Your love extends over all people, and to search for the Truth, which we have not known...' How could the Orthodox listen to these last words? It would have been interesting to look at that moment at the faces of the Orthodox hierarchs who had declared for all to hear that they, too, did not know the Truth. Every batyushka of ours in the remotest little village knows the Truth by experience, as he stands before the throne of God and prays to God in spirit and in truth. Even *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, which is completely subject to the censorship of the communist party, in citing the words of the prayer in its account of this conference, did not dare to translate the English 'truth' by the word 'istina', but translated it as 'pravda' ['righteousness']. Of course, everyone very well understood that in the given case the text of the prayer was speaking without the slightest ambiguity about the Truth. Perhaps the Orthodox hierarchs have resorted, in the conference, to the old Jesuit practice of reservatio mentalis, but in that case if all these delegates do not repent of the sin of communion in prayer with heretics, then we must consider them to be on the completely false path of apostasy from the Truth of Orthodoxy... Ecumenism is the heresy of heresies because until now each heresy in the history of the Church has striven to take the place of the true Church, but the ecumenical movement, in uniting all the heresies, invites all of them together to consider themselves the one true Church."<sup>316</sup>

Again, at the WCC's General Assembly at Nairobi in 1975, the Orthodox delegates, having signed an agreement to recognize the sacraments of the

---

<sup>316</sup> Vitaly, "Ekumenizm" (Ecumenism), *Pravoslavnij Vestnik (Orthodox Herald)*, June, 1969, pp. 14-30; *Moskva (Moscow)*, 1991, N 9, p. 149.



non-Orthodox delegates, had declared that “the Orthodox do not expect the other Christians to be converted to Orthodoxy in its historic and cultural reality of the past and the present and to become members of the Orthodox Church” – which gave the lie to their excuse that they were participating in the ecumenical movement “to witness to the non-Orthodox”.<sup>317</sup>

### 3. *Rapprochement with the Catholics*

During the New Delhi Congress, Nicodemus announced that the Vatican had invited the MP to send observers to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965); but that the MP had laid it down as a condition that there should be “no declarations hostile to our beloved country”. So for most of the next year, the MP chose to emphasise, albeit in a gentle way, the dogmatic differences between the two Churches.

However, in September-October, at the Second Pan-Orthodox Conference on Rhodes, it was decided to begin a theological dialogue with the Catholic Church. Moreover, - still more importantly, - at the beginning of October the Council for Religious Affairs told the Central Committee that the participation of observers at the Second Vatican Council would assist the establishment of useful contacts with the Vatican and would bind the Vatican in its promotion of hostile activity against the USSR. This official address of the Council to the Central Committee completed a process of change in attitude towards the Catholic Church and the question of the presence of observers at the Vatican Council from originally negative to a positive recognition of benefit for the Soviet government and for the MP of an improvement in their relations to the Vatican. The decision to allow the sending of observers to the Second Vatican Council was taken at the highest level of Soviet power, the Politburo, on October 10, 1962 (№ 58/30).<sup>318</sup>

The arrival of Russian Orthodox observers at the Council in time for its opening produced consternation in French Catholic circles, which accused the Vatican of “selling out” to communism.<sup>319</sup> But the French communist press was delighted: “Since the world socialist system shows its superiority indisputably and enjoys the approval of many hundreds of millions of men, the Church can no longer rest content with crude anti-communism. She has even given an undertaking, on the occasion of her dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, that there should be no direct attack on the communist regime at the Council.”<sup>320</sup>

---

<sup>317</sup> “Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement”, *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October 27 / November 9, 1997, p. 2.

<sup>318</sup> Protopresbyter Vitaly Borovoj, “I on byl veren do smerti” (He, too, was faithful unto death); Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, pp. 6-7.

<sup>319</sup> *Informations Catholiques Internationales* (International Catholic Information), January 1, 1963, p. 29; *Itinéraires* (Journeys), N 7, February, 1963, pp. 177-178; *La Croix* (The Cross), February 15, 1963, p. 5 (in French).

<sup>320</sup> *France Nouvelle* (New France), January 16-22, 1963, p. 15 (in French).

Why did the Vatican accept this condition, which so damaged her standing in the anti-communist West? Probably for the same reason that the MP-KGB agreed to send observers – to infiltrate the camp of the enemy. And the possibility exists that their main agent of infiltration was precisely the MP's Metropolitan Nicodemus...

This at first sight unlikely hypothesis gains credibility from the career of Fr. Michael Havryliv, a Russian priest who was secretly received into the Catholic Church in 1973. Fr. Serge Keleher writes: "The Capuchin priest told Havryliv that Metropolitan Nicodemus [of Leningrad] was secretly a Catholic bishop, recognized by Rome with jurisdiction from Pope Paul VI throughout Russia. This assertion is not impossible – but neither is it entirely proved.

"On September 6 1975 Havryliv made a sacramental general Confession before Metropolitan Nicodemus, who then accepted Havryliv's monastic vows and profession of Faith to the Apostolic See and the Pope of Rome. Kyr Nicodemus commanded Havryliv to order his monastic life according to the Jesuit Constitutions, and presented him with a copy of this document in Russian. This was all done privately; four days later the Metropolitan tonsured Havryliv a monk. On 9 October Kyr Nicodemus ordained Havryliv to the priesthood, without requiring the oaths customary for Russian Orthodox candidates to Holy Orders.

"In 1977 Havryliv was reassigned to the Moscow Patriarchate's archdiocese of L'viv and Ternopil... In Havryliv's final interview with Kyr Nicodemus, the Metropolitan of Leningrad 'blessed me and gave me instructions to keep my Catholic convictions and do everything possible for the growth of the Catholic cause, not only in Ukraine, but in Russia. The Metropolitan spoke of the practice of his predecessors – and also asked me to be prudent."<sup>321</sup>

This proved that beneath the "eirenic" ecumenical activities of the Vatican, there was a steely determination to take over the MP without any respect for the latter as a church. Havryliv was re-ordained by Nicodemus – a clear indication that Rome accepted the sacraments of the Orthodox for only as long as it suited her. When she had gained control, however, such recognition would no longer be forthcoming...

---

<sup>321</sup> Serge Keleher, *Passion and Resurrection – the Greek Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine, 1939-1989*, Stauropegion, L'viv, 1993, pp. 101-102. Cf. *The Tablet*, March 20, 1993. Recently, writes Ludmilla Perepiolkina, "the Catholic Journal *Truth and Life* published the memoirs of Miguel Arranz, in which this Jesuit, who in Nicodemus' time taught at the Leningrad Theological Academy, told, among other things, that with Nicodemus' blessing he celebrated 'the Eastern Rite Liturgy' in Nicodemus' house church at the Leningrad Theological Academy." (*Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 276, note).

On December 16, 1969, on the initiative of Metropolitan Nicodemus, the MP Synod resolved to allow Catholics and Old Ritualists to receive communion from Orthodox priests if they ask for it.<sup>322</sup>

The MP's Archbishop Basil of Brussels recalled: "It fell to me to defend the good name and Orthodoxy of the Russian Church at the Pan-Orthodox conferences (those like the Pan-Orthodox commission for dialogue with the Anglicans) with the following argumentation: 'This resolution of the Synod was elicited by a completely special situation of believers, and in particular of Catholics in the Soviet Union. Where there is not one Catholic church of priest for thousands of kilometres. Such a resolution was made by the Synod of Constantinople and Patriarch Joachim II in 1878 in relation to the Armenians. Theologically, it is difficult for me to justify such *oekonomia*, but I cannot judge the Russian hierarchs who live in contemporary Russia in difficult conditions. They know better than we what they are doing.' This argumentation satisfied everyone, even on Athos, but everything was destroyed by Metropolitan Nicodemus giving communion [to Catholic students] in Rome. 'What 'pastoral *oikonomia*' forced him to commune Catholics where there are so many Catholic churches?' they asked me. The only reply that I could give was: 'Your hierarchs even worse when they give to communion to everyone indiscriminately.' 'Our hierarchs, like Archbishop James of America or Athenagoras of London, are traitors to Orthodoxy, we have known that for a long time (replied to me Abbot George of the monastery of Grigorious on Athos). But that the Moscow Patriarchate, the Russian Orthodox Church, which we respect for her firmness in Orthodoxy, should act in this way in the person of Metropolitan Nicodemus, shocks us and deeply saddens us.' I recounted this reaction to Metropolitan Nicodemus. He even became angry: 'It's not important what they say on Athos. Athos is not an Autocephalous Church.'"<sup>323</sup>

Neither side in this argument seemed to understand that the giving of communion to a heretic *in any circumstances* is harmful for that heretic so long as he remains in his heresy. More Orthodox, therefore, was the robust response of the ROCOR Synod, which on March 31, 1970 condemned the MP resolution as follows: "The decision of the Moscow Patriarchate to give access to Roman Catholics to all the sacraments of the Orthodox Church... both violates the sacred canons and is contrary to the dogmatic teaching of Orthodoxy. By entering into communion with the heterodox, the Moscow Patriarchate alienates itself from unity with the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church. By this action it does not sanctify the heretics to whom it give sacraments, but itself becomes a partaker of their heresy."

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville commented: "Now, even if some entertained some sort of doubts about how we should regard the

---

<sup>322</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), 1970, N 1, p. 5.

<sup>323</sup> Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, p. 40.

contemporary Moscow Patriarchate, and whether we can consider it Orthodox after its intimate union with the enemies of God, the persecutors of the Faith and Christ's Church, these doubts must now be completely dismissed: by the very fact that it has entered into liturgical communion with the Papists, it has *fallen away from Orthodoxy* [emphasis in the original] and can no longer be considered Orthodox."<sup>324</sup>

In May-June, 1971 there was a council of the MP attended by 75 hierarchs, 85 clergy and 78 laymen, representatives of many other Orthodox Churches and the general secretary of the WCC. It confirmed all the decisions made by the MP since 1945. Only one candidate for the patriarchate (Patriarch Alexis had died in April) was put forward: the weak Metropolitan Pimen, who was elected unanimously in an open ballot (a secret ballot was not allowed by the all-powerful Metropolitan Nicodemus). The 1961 statute taking control of the parishes away from the bishops and clergy was confirmed<sup>325</sup>, as was (unanimously) Nicodemus' report on the decision to give communion to Catholics, in which he said that the measure was justified "insofar as we have a common of faith with them in relation to the sacraments".<sup>326</sup>

On September 28, 1971, ROCOR's Hierarchical Council decreed: "The lack of accord of the decree of the Moscow Patriarchate, concerning the granting of communion to Roman Catholics, with Orthodox dogmatic teaching and the Church canons is completely clear to any person even slightly informed in theology. It was justly condemned by a decree of the Synod of the Church of Greece. The holy canons do permit the communication of a great sinner who is under penance (*epitimia*) when he is about to die (I Ecumenical 13, Carthage 6, Gregory of Nyssa 2 and 5), but there is not a single canon which would extend this to include persons foreign to the Orthodox Church, as long as they have not renounced their false doctrines. No matter what explanation Metropolitan Nicodemus and the other Moscow hierarchs might try to give of this act, it is completely clear that by this decision, even though with certain limitations, communion has been established between the Moscow Patriarchate and Roman Catholics. Furthermore, the latter have already made the decision to permit members of the Orthodox Church to receive communion from them. All this was particularly clearly demonstrated in the service held on December 14, 1970, in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, when Metropolitan Nicodemus gave communion to Catholic clerics. It is perfectly clear that this act could not be justified by any need. By this act the Moscow Patriarchate has betrayed Orthodoxy. If the 45th Canon of the Holy Apostles

---

<sup>324</sup> Averky, *Contemporary Life in the Light of the Word of God: Sermons and Speeches* (1969-1973), volume III, Jordanville, p. 216.

<sup>325</sup> In his Memoirs Archbishop Basil of Brussels recalls asking the formerly Catacomb Archbishop Benjamin (Novitsky) of Irkutsk why he had not spoken against this measure. Benjamin replied: "You know, I did 12 years forced labour in Kolyma. I don't have the strength at my age to start that again. Forgive me!" (Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, p. 47).

<sup>326</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), 1971, N 7, p. 31, N 8, pp. 23-24; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, pp. 47-49.

excommunicates from the Church an Orthodox bishop or cleric who has ‘only prayed together with heretics’, and the 10th Apostolic Canon forbids even prayer together with those who are excommunicated, what can we say about a bishop who dares to offer the Holy Mysteries to them? If catechumens must leave the church before the sanctification of the Gifts and are not permitted even at point of death to receive communion until they are united to the Church, how can one justify the communicating of persons who, being members of heretical communities, are much farther away from the Church than a catechumen, who is preparing to unite with her? The act of the Moscow Synod, which was confirmed by the recent Council of the Moscow Patriarchate in Moscow, extends the responsibility for this un-Orthodox decision to all participants of the Moscow Council and to their entire Church organization. The decision to admit Catholics to communion is an act that is not only anticanonical, but heretical as well, as inflicting harm on the Orthodox doctrine of the Church, since only true members of the Church are called to communicate of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. The Moscow decree, logically considered, recognizes as her members those who, through their doctrinal errors, in both heart and mind are far from her.”

On the same day the Council issued an important statement on the reception of heretics, considerably “tightening up” its practice: “The Holy Church has from antiquity believed that there can be only one true baptism, namely that which is accomplished in her bosom: ‘One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism’ (Ephesians 4.5). In the Symbol of Faith “one baptism” is also confessed, while the 46<sup>th</sup> canon of the Holy Apostles indicates: ‘We order that a bishop or priest who has accepted (that is, recognized) the baptism or sacrifice of heretics should be deposed.’

“However, when the zeal of any heretics in their struggle against the Church weakened, and when there was a question of their mass conversion to Orthodoxy, the Church, to ease their union, accepted them into her bosom by another rite. [There follows a discussion of St. Basil the Great’s first canonical epistle.]

“And so St. Basil the Great, and through his words the Ecumenical Council, in establishing the principle that outside the Holy Orthodox Church there is no true baptism, allowed out of pastoral condescension, so-called oikonomia, the acceptance of certain heretics and schismatics without a new baptism. And in accordance with this principle, the Ecumenical Councils allowed the reception of heretics by various rites, taking account of the weakening of their fierceness against the Orthodox Church.

“[There follows a discussion of Timothy of Alexandria’s explanation of this in *The Rudder*.]

“In relation to the Roman Catholics and Protestants who claim to preserve baptism as a sacrament (for example, the Lutherans), the practice was introduced from the time of Peter the First of receiving them without baptism, through the renunciation of heresy and chrismation of Protestants and unconfirmed Catholics. Before Peter Catholics were baptised in Russia. In Greece the practice also changed, but for almost three hundred years, after a certain break, the practice of baptising those who came from Catholicism and Protestantism was again introduced. Those who are received by another rite are not recognized as Orthodox in Greece. In many cases also such children of our Russian Church were not even allowed to receive Holy Communion.

“Bearing in mind this circumstance, and the present growth of the ecumenical heresy, which tries completely to wipe out the difference between Orthodoxy and every heresy, so that the Moscow Patriarchate, in spite of the sacred canons, has issued a resolution allowing Roman Catholics to be communed in certain cases, the Hierarchical Council has recognized the introduction of a stricter practice to be necessary, that is, that all heretics coming to the Church should be baptized, and that only insofar as it is necessary and with the permission of the bishop, from considerations of oikonomia, should another practice be allowed in relation to certain people, that is, the reception into the Church of Roman Catholics and Protestants who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity through renunciation of heresy and chrismation.”<sup>327</sup>

#### 4. “Nikodimovschina”

From the 1970s we see the ascendancy in the MP of a school of thought devoted both to the interests of the Soviet State and of the ecumenical movement which has been called “Nikodimovschina” from its first leader and originator, Metropolitan Nicodemus, KGB Agent “Sviatoslav”.

The fruits of Nicodemus’ activity was soon evident. “The *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* recorded that by 1972 the WCC had been converted from a ‘pro-Western’ to a ‘progressive’ orientation in its policies on peace, disarmament and related matters. Assiduous advocacy by the Christian Peace Conference and others of the view that Christianity and communism were natural allies in support of the national liberation movement induced the WCC to provide funds for African guerilla movements, including the Rhodesian Patriotic Front, believed to be responsible for a massacre of British missionaries in 1978.”<sup>328</sup>

---

<sup>327</sup> *Tserkovnaia Zhizn’* (Church Life), July-December, 1971, pp. 52-54; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, part 5, pp. 52-53.

<sup>328</sup> Dr. Olga Ackerly, “High Treason in ROCOR: The Rapprochement with Moscow”, [http://stnicholasandles.com/High\\_Treason.htm](http://stnicholasandles.com/High_Treason.htm), p. 32.

Ever since writing his master's thesis on Pope John XXIII, the man who led the Catholic Church onto the ecumenical scene, Metropolitan Nicodemus had been trying to do the same for the Moscow Patriarchate. Hierodeacon (now Hieromonk) Theophanes (Areskin) writes: "Metropolitan Nicodemus begins his exposition of his ecumenist faith with an Orthodox thesis on the unity of the whole human race in Adam: 'Mankind, the whole Adam (in the expression of St. Macarius the Great) is united by means of the Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection of the last Adam (I Corinthians 14.45), the second Man, the Lord Who "for us men" came down from the heavens (I Corinthians 15.47), and, having tasted "death for us all by the grace of God" (Hebrews 2.9), "is the Saviour of all men" (I Timothy 4.10)... We all, in accordance with the ineffable wisdom of God, have been bound from the beginning with the bonds of unity and brotherhood'. But further on Metropolitan Nicodemus reveals his understanding of this unity: 'Christ died for all men, and, as the new Adam, he laid the beginning for a new humanity... The fullness of the grace-filled gifts is communicated to people by the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ. However, it would be a dangerous error to consider that Christ, the Redeemer of the whole world, does not extend His saving influence on the whole of humanity.' This saving influence consists, according to Metropolitan Nicodemus, 'in faith in Christ Jesus, acting through love in each separate person, as in the whole of humanity, with which we are united by our common human nature. God redeemed us into an undivided, indivisible, unchanging and unconfused union with this nature through the incarnation of the Only-Begotten Son.' 'By taking on and deifying our nature in the Divine Incarnation the Chief and Accomplisher of our faith (Hebrews 12.2) and of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5.9), our Lord Jesus Christ reconciled, united and related *the whole of humanity with God, and all people with each other*'. 'The Church as the Kingdom of God is likened to leaven which penetrates into all the parts of the whole that is humanity, into the whole world, and acts with that measure of power which corresponds to the moral level of the bearers of Christ's truth. And although far from all people actively and consciously abide in the Church, *the Church abides in all through the love of Christ*, for this love is not limited by any part of humanity, but is distributed to all people.' Hence 'the activity of the Spirit of God is not limited by confessional limits. His manifestation is completely and, above all, unconditionally revealed in the Church, but the traces of His presence are evident everywhere where there are the fruits of spiritual life: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness...' Therefore all people, the whole Body of humanity (Adam), are invisibly united with God and is a certain 'invisible Church'. The organization of the Church is understood by Nicodemus as 'the visible Church', in which 'baptism defines the *visible* belonging to Christ'. Metropolitan Nicodemus consciously confesses the 'baptism' of Protestants to be true, turning to his 'brothers in Christ', the Protestants, the members of the WCC: 'Through the mystery of holy Baptism we are engrafted onto the saving Divine Vine...' But the visible Church 'is called to realize the fruits of the Incarnation and Redemption in the life of her *immediate* members.'

“And so, according to Metropolitan Nicodemus, all people are ‘Christians’, it is true that the Church of Christ, the Body of Christ, the New Adam, is one, but it is not yet united into one ecclesiastical organization under one leader. The aim of the ecumenists is to create this *mediation*, that is, one single visible ecclesiastical organization for all. In this way the ecumenical Church and the world become indistinguishable from each other. It is not difficult to find the primary source of this faith. It is sergianism – a heretical teaching that the Church, the Body of Christ, is a simple ecclesiastical organization, just like ordinary secular organizations, political parties, communities, commercial structures, etc.”<sup>329</sup>

The death of Nicodemus in 1978 in Rome at the feet of Pope John-Paul I<sup>330</sup> was a graphic symbol of the true direction of inter-Christian ecumenism – aided and abetted, on the Orthodox side, by the KGB. His place both as chief ideologist of the MP, Metropolitan of Leningrad and leader of the “Nikodimovshina” school of theology, was taken by his pupil, the future “Patriarch” Alexis II (Ridiger). And when Pope John-Paul died a few days after Nicodemus, Alexis celebrated a festive service for the repose of his soul in the Moscow Cathedral of the Epiphany, while another of Nicodemus’ disciples, the present Metropolitan Cyril (Gundyaev), celebrated a similar service in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in Leningrad.<sup>331</sup>

Alexis, an Estonian by birth (he was bishop in Tallin before his transfer to Leningrad), had been a KGB agent with codename “Drozdov” since 1958 and an active ecumenist for almost as long as his mentor. He was a delegate to the Third General Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi in 1961, (with Metropolitans Nicodemus and Anthony (Bloom)), a member of the Central Committee of the WCC from 1961 to 1968, president of the World Conference, “The Church and Society” in Geneva in 1966, and a member of the Commission “Faith and Order” of the WCC from 1961 to 1968.

In the 1974 Furov report to the Central Committee of the USSR Alexis (together with his predecessor Patriarch Pimen) was placed in the category of those bishops who “affirm both in words and deeds not only loyalty but also patriotism towards the socialist society; strictly observe the laws on cults, and educate the parish clergy and believers in the same spirit; realistically understand that our state is not interested in proclaiming the role of religion

---

<sup>329</sup> Hierodeacon Theophanes, “The Head of the Moscow Patriarchate”, *Vertograd-Inform*, N 20, October, 2000, pp. 18-19.

<sup>330</sup> “On the Death of a Soviet Bishop”, *Orthodox Christian Witness*, October 23 / November 5, 1978; Piers Compton, *The Broken Cross: The Hidden Hand in the Vatican*, Sudbury: Neville Spearman, 1983, pp. 158-159.

<sup>331</sup> L. Perepiolkina, *Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 129.



and the church in society; and, realizing this, do not display any particular activeness in extending the influence of Orthodoxy among the population.”<sup>332</sup>

According to a KGB document of 1988, “An order was drafted by the USSR KGB chairman to award an honorary citation to agent DROZDOV” [i.e. Alexis] for unspecified services to state security.<sup>333</sup>

“Already in 1966,” writes Hierodeacon Theophanes, “in his speech before the delegation of the German Evangelical church at a conference in Moscow, the future head of the MP in the name of Christ Himself declared that ‘Jesus Christ considers His own, that is, as Christians, all those who believe in Him and obey Him, and this is more than the Orthodox Church.’ If we remember that, according to Orthodox teaching, Christ adopted people to Himself only in His Hypostasis, that is, in His Body which is the Orthodox Church, then it is obvious that the metropolitan is here confessing a christological heresy, considering as Christians those who are outside the Church – calling them ‘God’s’, that is, the Church’s.

“Alexis still more clearly confesses that all the non-Orthodox Christians are the Church of Christ in his report to the 8th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, published in the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* in 1980 (№№ 1-3). Here, blasphemously mixing up and identifying the concepts of the presence of God in the world and His energies and presence in the Church, the metropolitan very distinctly reveals his heretical teaching on the “all-embracing and unconditional” Incarnation of Christ, which automatically turns the whole of humanity, all Christians, Muslims, pagans, and in general all ‘men of good will’ into members of the Body of Christ, that is, the Church! Metropolitan Alexis openly teaches that the same grace of the Holy Spirit acts in the non-Orthodox churches – the participants in the WCC – as in the Orthodox Church: ‘We (the CEC) have learned to pray together, to understand the spirit and depth of prayer for each other, to feel the breath of the grace of the Holy Spirit in joint prayer to the Lord ... we must thank God for the joy of our communion in Christ, for the joy of the ever-increasing experience of brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ in our work.’ Thus it was precisely in joint prayers with heretics that the archpastor felt the breath of ‘the grace of the Holy Spirit’! We should note that ‘ecumenical prayer’ is a very important moment in the ecumenical dialogue, it not only witnesses to the presence among the ecumenists of some common ‘god’ to whom this prayer is raised, but it is also a practical recognition of the action of the Holy Spirit in heterodoxy, thereby aiding the aggiornamento of the churches. This is what the future head of the MP says on this subject: ‘The aggiornamento of the churches is attained in the first place by prayer and brotherly love; joint prayers create a special atmosphere, a spiritual mood; (he goes on to cite A.S.

---

<sup>332</sup> Christopher Andrew and Vasily Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin File*, London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1999, pp. 639-640.

<sup>333</sup> Andrew and Mitrokhin, op. cit., p. 650.

Khomiakov) prayer is the life of the Church and the voice of her love, the eternal breathing of the Spirit of God. We believe that through joint prayers the breathing of the Spirit of God jointly enriches us all.'

"According to Orthodox teaching, it is precisely the Holy Spirit that makes a man a member of the Church of Christ, a Christian. But Metropolitan Alexis recognises that the Holy Spirit works in heretics just as in the Orthodox Church, and therefore heretics, like Orthodox Christians, are the Church of Christ: 'We believe that the Holy Spirit – visibly or invisibly – continues until now His saving activity in the world. You and I, dear brothers and sisters, representing various Churches and the human race, live *by the same real and grace-filled power* of Pentecost'. From this there follows an open admittance on the part of the metropolitan that the heretical communities are the Church and the Body of Christ: 'We, the Orthodox, are lovingly disposed to our non-Orthodox brothers, for we have all *been baptized in one Spirit*, and we have all *been made to drink into one Spirit* (I Corinthians12.13).' Here the Apostle Paul's eucharistic (even liturgical) terminology has not been used in vain, so as once more to emphasise: Orthodox and heretics are not simply a divided Church, but the Body of Christ, organically one in the Holy Spirit.

"The source of this teaching of Metropolitan Alexis on the Holy Spirit is a heretical Christology, whose essence consists in the assertion that 'we all have been received into the nature of Jesus Christ the God-man as an integral nature. And this truth forces us to believe that every person striving towards goodness and righteousness does the work of Christ on earth, even if he intellectually has not known Christ or has even rejected Him. From the Godmanhood of Christ it follows that the path into the Kingdom of God has been opened to all men. Consequently, with the Incarnation of the Son of God the whole of humanity becomes His potential Church, and in this sense the boundaries of the Christian Ecumene (or the pan-human family) are far wider than the boundaries of the Christian world.' Hence Metropolitan Alexis' teaching becomes understandable: insofar as Christ has received into His Hypostasis the *common* nature of man, all people, that is, all human hypostases of all generations are saved and remain in Christ, that is, in the Church. In other words, Christ has saved the whole nature of man, and consequently, according to the thought of Metropolitan Alexis, all people.

"However, according to the Orthodox teaching, 'God the Word, on becoming incarnate, did not take on the nature viewed as an abstraction in pure thought... nor the nature contemplated in species (that is, viewed in all the hypostases of the human race – H. Th.), for He did not take on all the hypostases, but He took on that which received its existence in His Hypostasis'. That is, it is impossible to say that since God the Word became Man, all people are saved by virtue of being men. But Metropolitan Alexis affirms that in the humanity of Christ is contained all men's hypostases. Such a teaching was confessed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the Monk Nilus of Calabria,

who taught that all human hypostases are present or are contained in the humanity taken on by the Lord and are 'co-deified' together with Him. The Orthodox Church anathematized Nilus and his heresy: 'If anyone dogmatizes that all human hypostases are in the flesh taken on by the Lord and are co-deified with it, let him be anathema, for this is empty chatter, or, rather, manifest impiety.' And although the metropolitan makes the qualification that humanity for him is only 'the potential church', nevertheless he later on unambiguously speaks of the whole of humanity as of the Church – the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit: 'Christ redeemed, cleansed and recreated a common human nature for all, while the Holy Spirit morally transfigures each human personality, gives the Christian the fullness of grace, makes him a temple of God and dwells in him, raises the growth of spirituality in the mind and the heart, leads him to every truth and gives him spiritual gifts to his benefit: to one – the word of wisdom, to another – the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit... and other gifts (I Corinthians 12.7-11), so that human talents should be revealed more fully.' In this way, insofar as God the Word has been incarnate in a common human nature, His Body is the divided Christian Church in the combination of all its separate parts. However, the saving action of the Holy Spirit is poured out even beyond the bounds of the Body of Christ, penetrating into and deifying the body of the whole of humanity: 'The all-embracing and most powerful force of the Holy Spirit is spread out onto the whole life of our world, transforming it in the course of the historical process of the struggle between good and evil.'

"And so, thanks to a clever substitution of concepts, the real difference between the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which God providentially preserves the world in existence and leads people to the Church, and the deifying mystical presence of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ, the Church, is destroyed, which completely abolishes the difference between the Church and the world: now 'the cultural efflorescence of European and world Christianity' is declared to be an action of the Holy Spirit, and even the Salt-2 treaty between Brezhnev and Carter concerning the limiting of strategic offensive weapons is also 'a manifestation of the invisible power of the Holy Spirit acting in the world for the good of the whole of humanity.'

"The consequences of this 'pan-human Pentecost' are expressed by the metropolitan mainly in the terms of humanism and peace-making: 'Christian concern for questions of social justice', 'the elements of the movement for peace', Christians' service to people and their 'involvement in all the complexity of the real life of the world'. In this way the life of grace in the Body of Christ is substituted by a humanistic 'serving the affairs of the world'.

"It is understandable that this 'theology of peace' should be very convenient for the dialogue not only with any heretical Christian communities, but also with any religions, even with utopian teachings like communism.

"But how is such a faith compatible with the Orthodox teaching on the uniqueness and singleness of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church? Yes, admits Metropolitan Alexis, 'the oneness and unity of the Church is an ecclesiological axiom', but in actual fact 'an invisible unity as the unity of Christ and the Holy Spirit lives in the visible multitude of Churches, each of which has its particular face', affirms the metropolitan, citing his brother in ecumenism, Professor Archbishop Vladimir (Sabodan). Before us here is the classical ecumenist ecclesiology – 'the branch theory', which was invented by Archbishop Stylianos of Australia (Constantinopolitan patriarchate), or, using the language of Soviet theological thought, the ecclesiology of 'the traumatized Body of Christ', a fruit of the refined minds of the 'ecumenist theologians' of the MP – the main teacher and planter of the ecumenist heresy in the MP was Metropolitan Nicodemus (Rotov)." <sup>334</sup>

### 5. The Anathema against Ecumenism

In 1982, an inter-denominational eucharistic service was composed at a conference in Lima, Peru, in which the Protestant and Orthodox representatives to the WCC agreed that the baptism, eucharist and ordinations of *all* denominations were valid and acceptable.<sup>335</sup> The next year, the Vancouver General Assembly of the WCC began with a pagan rite performed by local Indians and contained prayer services in which Orthodox hierarchs as well as representatives of many non-Christian religions took part.

The Synod of ROCOR, also meeting in Canada, condemned this latest and most extreme manifestation of ecumenism as follows: "In its decision of 28 July / 10 August, our Council explained that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia does not participate in the World Council of Churches insofar as the latter attempts to represent those assembled in it, representatives of religions differing in their opinions, as though they had some sort of unity in faith. In reality, though, this very position is a lie, inasmuch as they, members of various confessions and sects, have not given up their points of disagreement with each other, much less with the Orthodox Church, in dogmas and in fundamental attitudes. In the name of unifying formulas, these differences of opinion are not destroyed, but are just set aside. Instead of the unshakable truths of the faith, they try to see only opinions, not obligatory for anyone. In reply to the confession of the one Orthodox Faith, they say together with Pilate: 'What is truth?' And the nominally Orthodox members of the Ecumenical Movement more and more deserve the reproach of the Angel of the Church of Laodicea: 'I know your works: you are neither hot nor cold: O if only you were hot or cold' (Revelation 3.15). A clear manifestation of such false union was the serving of the so-called Lima Liturgy..."

---

<sup>334</sup> Hierodeacon Theophanes, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-18.

<sup>335</sup> See Archbishop Vitaly, "The 1983 Sobor of Bishops", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, August 20 / September 2, 1984, p. 4.

Then the Synod anathematised ecumenism, declaring: "To those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ's Church is divided into so-called 'branches' which differ in doctrine and way of life, or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all 'branches' or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united in one body; and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, **Anathema**."<sup>336</sup>

The implication of this anathema was clear: all Orthodox Churches that were fully participating members of the WCC – and this, as we have seen, included the MP – fell under it. As I.M. writes: "There is no heresy without heretics and their practical activity. The WCC in its declarations says: The Church confesses, the Church teaches, the Church does this, the Church does that. In this way the WCC witnesses that it does not recognize itself to be simply a council of churches, but the one church. And all who are members of the WCC are members of this one false church, this synagogue of satan. And by this participation in the WCC all the local Orthodox churches fall under the ROCOR anathema of 1983 and fall away from the True Church. In their number is the Moscow Patriarchate..."<sup>337</sup>

However, this most authoritative condemnation of ecumenism yet had no discernible effect on the apostates: the 1980s and 1990s were the decades of "super-ecumenism", that is, not only inter-Christian but also inter-religious ecumenism, when there seemed to be no limit to the blasphemy against the Orthodox Faith committed by "Orthodox" hierarchs. Thus Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk asserted that ecumenism should include "all men of good will", including atheists; Patriarch Parthenius of Alexandria declared that Mohammed was an Apostle of God; and Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow asserted that Christians and Jews have essentially the same faith, and sent regular messages of congratulations and encouragement to Monophysites, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists. After a slight "cooling" in the late 1990s, the ecumenists' zeal for blasphemy has resumed, with the MP sending a 27-member delegation to WCC's General Assembly Brazil in 2006.

---

<sup>336</sup> See "A Contemporary Patristic Document", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, November 14/27, 1983, p. 3; "Encyclical Letter of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 33, N 6, November-December, 1983, p. 13; Bishop Hilarion of Manhattan, "Answers to Questions Posed by the Faithful of the Orthodox Parish in Somerville, South Carolina", Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, 1992.

<sup>337</sup> "Iskazhenie dogmata 'O edinstve Tserkvi' v ispovedaniakh very Sinodom i Soborom Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej " (Distortion of the Dogma 'On the Unity of the Church' in the Confessions of Faith of the Synod and Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad) (MS).

The only thing that has changed in these decades is that the Church that issued the anathema, ROCOR, has faltered in its understanding, not only of ecumenism and of the MP's full and unrestrained participation in it, but of the very meaning of heresy and anathemas on heresy. Thus the ROCOR priest Alexander Lebedev called the idea that the anathema strikes down all ecumenists "the heresy of universal jurisdiction". The present writer replied to Fr. Alexander: "Thinking about your 'heresy of universal jurisdiction', it seems to me that you confuse two things: the Church as an external organisation, and the Church as a mystical organism, to use the terminology of Hieromartyr Catacomb Bishop Mark (Novoselov) (+1938). It seems to me that you are right as regards the Church as an external organisation, but wrong as regards the Church as a mystical organism. Let me explain.

"An anathema excludes the person anathematized from the holy mysteries, from membership of the Holy Church. In the first place, of course, that applies to the local Church of which that person is a member. It applies to other Churches only to the extent that the leaders of those other Churches agree with the original anathema and 'sign up to it', as it were. Thus the heretic Arius was originally anathematized by the Bishop of Alexandria, which meant that he was excluded from receiving the sacraments throughout the Church of Alexandria. However, not all the bishops of neighbouring Churches agreed with this anathema, so Arius was able to receive communion in other Local Churches. To this extent the anathema was only of local significance. It required the convening of the First Ecumenical Council before Arius was anathematized 'universally' - and even then, the anathema was not universally received, as the history of the Church in the next fifty years demonstrates.

"It is a different matter when we consider an anathema sub specie aeternitatis, in its mystical, super-terrestrial significance. From that point of view, the anathematization of a heretic begins in the heavens. Thus even before Arius had been 'locally' anathematized by St. Alexander of Alexandria, the Lord appeared to his predecessor, St. Peter, with a torn cloak, and in answer to St. Peter's question: 'O Creator, who has torn Thy tunic?', replied: 'The mindless Arius; he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood' (St. Demetrius of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, November 25). So not only Arius, but all those who followed him, had been separated from the Church by the anathema of Her First Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ, years (or rather, aeons) before even the first 'local' anathema had been uttered. All heresies and heretics are anathematized 'from all eternity' by the eternal Lord, for just as every truth is approved by the Truth Himself from all eternity, so is every lie condemned by Him from all eternity, being condemned with 'the father of lies' to the gehenna of fire (Revelation 22.15).

“The task of hierarchs on earth is to discern the decisions of the heavenly Church, and then apply these heavenly decisions on earth, in space and time. As St. Bede the Venerable (+735) writes: ‘The keys of the Kingdom designate the actual knowledge and power of discerning who are worthy to be received into the Kingdom, and who should be excluded from it as being unworthy’ (Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, *P.L.* 94, col. 219).<sup>338</sup> From this point of view, it matters not a jot whether a heretic is anathematized locally or universally, since he has already been anathematized by the heavenly Church. Or rather, it matters in this sense: that if the heretic has been anathematized locally, but this anathema is not accepted by the rest of the Church, then the rest of the Church is under the grave danger of falling under this same anathema. For the local anathema, if it is just, is the reflection of a heavenly anathema; and the anathema of the heavenly Church is universal....

“This explains why, when local Churches anathematized a heresy, they never qualified the anathema (as you, Fr. Alexander, would like to qualify ROCOR's anathema against ecumenism) by saying: ‘but of course, this applies only to the heretics in our local Church’. On the contrary: history shows that local Churches freely anathematized heretics, not only in their own Churches, but also in others. Thus Nestorius, a heretic of the Church of Constantinople, was first condemned by a local Synod of the Church of Rome under St. Celestine; the Monothelite heretics were first condemned by a local Synod, again, of the Church of Rome; and the Papist heretics were first condemned by a local Synod of the Church of Constantinople.

“Consider what St. Maximus said of the Monothelites: ‘In addition to having excommunicated themselves from the Church, they have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?’ Note that the saint says that the heretics have excommunicated themselves; for as the Apostle Paul writes, he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself’ (Titus 3.11). But the heretics' self-condemnation and self-exclusion from the Church as a mystical organism must be followed by their exclusion from the Church as an external organization, lest others be infected with their heresy. Hence the need for councils of bishops to anathematize them, following the rule: ‘A heretic after the first and second admonition reject’ (Titus 3.10), and: ‘If he refuses to listen to the Church, let him be unto you as a heathen and a publican’ (Matthew 18.17). And clearly St. Maximus considered that the anathema of the local Church of Rome had validity throughout the Ecumenical Church.

---

<sup>338</sup> Again, St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes: “The hierarchs have the power of excommunication as expressers of the divine statutes. This is not to say that the All-Wise Godhead slavishly follows their irrational whims, but that they are guided by the Spirit regarding those worthy of excommunication” (*On Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, chapter 7).

“Administrative matters and moral falls are the business of local Churches and councils. However, heresies of their very nature are of universal significance, having the potential to infect the whole Church. That is why the appearance of a heresy in one local Church is not the business only of that local Church, but of all the local Churches - and every local Church can and must anathematize it.

“Even the anathema of single bishopric has universal power and validity if it is uttered in the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the eternal Truth. Thus in 1069 the bishops of the metropolitanate of York, in the north of England, solemnly anathematized both the Pope of Rome and his stooge, William the conqueror, the first papist king of England. All the evidence is that they did not know that the Church of Constantinople had already anathematized Rome in 1054. So they were not simply confirming the word of a higher authority. They did not need a higher authority. They were successors of the apostles, with the power to bind and to loose. And they used that power, not for personal gain (on the contrary: they paid for their boldness with their lives), even against the most senior bishop in Christendom...

“In the same way, in 1983 the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad, using the power to bind and to loose given them by the Bishop of bishops, the Lord Jesus Christ, translated onto earth, into space and time, the completely binding and universally applicable decision already arrived at from all eternity by the Council of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Ecumenism is, was and always will be a heresy, indeed ‘the heresy of heresies’, and the ecumenist heretics are, were and always will be outside the Church, the mystical Body of Christ. The decision of the ROCOR Sobor in 1983, confirmed with no change to its universal wording in 1998, expelled these already self-condemned and Divinely condemned heretics also from the external organization of the Church - and woe to any man, of whatever Church, who despises that decision, for he will then surely fall under the same anathema...”<sup>339</sup>

*March 31 / April 13, 2006.*

*St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow and Enlightener of America.*

## **24. LESSONS IN RUSSIANNES FROM A SOVIET POLITICIAN**

*He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.*

Matthew 24.13.

The proposed union between the MP and ROCOR would seem to be a strictly ecclesiastical matter. And yet it is strange how many politicians and

---

<sup>339</sup> V. Moss, “Re: [paradosis] The Heresy of Universal Jurisdiction”, [orthodox-tradition@egroups.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@egroups.com), October 12, 2000.



economists are getting involved – and always on the side of the union rather than against it. Of course, the first among these is KGB President Putin himself, whose initiative has propelled the whole process from the side of the MP, and whose interest in creating a series of spy-stations in ROCOR parishes throughout the western world is obvious. More recently, we learned that the Russian-American financier Boris Jordan has been invited to speak at the May Sobor. What business (financial or otherwise) does the former chief executive of Gazprom Media and general director of its NTV television network have with this strictly dogmatic-canonical matter?!

Another example is Natalia Narochitskaya, “a State Duma deputy and well-known historian”, who in an article in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* suggests that ROCOR should cast away all doubts concerning the proposed union with the MP. Naturally, Narochitskaya does not discuss dogmas or canons. Her arguments are frankly emotional. “Today’s doubts are like temptations endured by a person who wants to be baptized but the enemy of mankind whispers into his ear: Wait, you are not ready; don’t do it today, do it tomorrow!... [However, there may be no tomorrow.] At a time when all the forces in the world have united to prevent Russia from restoring her national and religious identity, the Russian people cannot see the virtue and truth of a Church which cannot set aside secondary matters and instead of offering an embrace, requests that a score be settled.”

Of course, we would expect Duma deputies in today’s neo-Soviet Russian Federation to know all about “the enemy of mankind” and his temptations! As for the grace of baptism, this is indeed an issue. ROCOR has the grace of baptism; the MP does not. So ROCOR joining the MP rather than the MP joining ROCOR means ROCOR *losing* the grace of baptism rather than acquiring it. Again, ROCOR now has the Body and Blood of Christ; the MP does not. So if ROCOR were to join the MP rather than the other way round, she would lose the grace of the Eucharist, thereby fulfilling the words of the Prophet Jeremiah: “*The Holy Flesh has passed from you*” ([Jeremiah 11.15](#)). Which is precisely why the enemy of mankind is whispering to her hierarchs to join the MP!

“The Russian people cannot see the virtue and truth of a Church which cannot set aside secondary matters...” Has Narochitskaya asked the opinion of the Russian people? Does she really know what they think? Are they really indignant with ROCOR for not joining the MP? Why, then, does such a tiny proportion of the Russian people go regularly to the MP churches (the statistics are especially poor in Moscow)? Is the truth not rather that the Russian cannot see the virtue and truth in the *MP*, with its KGB-homosexual metropolitans who trade in duty-free tobacco and alcohol, praise the new world order, hob-nob with rabbis and popes and muftis and imams – and seize by force the churches of the True Orthodox Christians?

But these are “secondary matters” in Narochnitskaya’s eyes. Otherwise she wouldn’t be a State Duma deputy, would she? Secondary, too, for her are the heresies of ecumenism and sergianism...

“What kind of faith is it without all-forgiving love; what kind of Orthodox Christians are people who try to see the mote in a neighbor’s eye; what kind of love for Russia is this if expressed as admiration for oneself rather than for Russia? [For while] Christian Europe has surrendered without resistance and is disappearing, it is post-Soviet Russia alone – however paradoxically – that is rising up.”

“Paradoxical” is a good word in this context. A better would be: “glaring and complete contradiction”. So “post-Soviet” (you mean: “neo-Soviet”, Ms. Narochnitskaya) Russia is “alone” rising up? How can the Sodom and Gomorrah that is modern Russia be described as “rising up” in any meaningful sense? Aren’t you forgetting the rampant crime, the prostitution, the drug-taking? What about the demographic catastrophe, caused by the fact that Russian men drink themselves to early deaths out of despair, while Russian women exceed the women of all other nations in the numbers of their abortions? (A Russian priest from Jerusalem told me recently that he regularly confesses pilgrims from Russia who have had eight or nine abortions – and these must be the more pious ones since they go to confession!) What about the almost complete grip of organized criminals on business? Or the almost complete disappearance of free speech in the media? Or the sheer savagery in Chechnya? Or the vast number of suicides in the army? Or the return of the red star and the hammer and sickle to public life in “post-” Soviet Russia? Or – worst of all – the dithyrambs offered by both priests and politicians to Stalin, the worst butcher of Christians, and human beings in general, in world history?

“It is sad to read the words of lay émigrés who, isolating themselves in an ivory tower, endlessly reiterate and project upon today’s Russia and today’s Russians the notions of the ‘cursed days’ and the demons of the 1920s. One must be completely and intentionally isolated from reality, and refuse to change anything, to fail to see how different today’s Russians, today’s Russia and her much-suffering Church are from antiquated clichés.”

Now where do I remember reading this phrase “ivory tower” before? Ah yes! In Metropolitan Sergius’ declaration: “Only ivory-tower dreamers can think that such an enormous society as our Orthodox Church, with the whole of its organization, can have a peaceful existence in the State while hiding itself from the authorities.” Rejecting these “ivory-tower dreamers”, Metropolitan Sergius decided to build his own ivory tower: forgetting that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4.4), he decided to become friends with Stalin, thereby winning “peace” for himself but torments and death for the rest of the Orthodox population...

But what is Ms. Narochnitskaya saying: that the days of Lenin and Stalin were not “cursed days”, and that the demons did not control Russia then?! Is she saying that the descriptions of the horrors of those days are simply “antiquated clichés”?! If so, then she is not the historian she claims to be. At least she is not denying that the Russian Church is “much-suffering”. But of course she cannot, unless she “completely and intentionally isolates herself from reality”, admit that that word applies to the contemporary MP, one of the richest and most privileged business corporations in Russia today. Even in Soviet times MP hierarchs would go round in limousines: they are no poorer now – unlike their much-suffering flock, who somehow do not seem to benefit from the enormous riches acquired by their hierarchy, but have to, for example, pay 1000 rubles for a prayer of absolution to be read over them to remove the sin of abortion...

In case what I have said should be derided as the word of a foreigner who knows nothing about Russia, let me cite the words of Archpriest Lev Lebedev, a convert from the MP to ROCOR, who knew the true condition of the MP from the inside: “Only after... 1990, in a situation and atmosphere of *relative* civil liberty, and especially after the staged supposed ‘putsch’ of the dissolution of the CPSU in 1991 and even of Soviet power in 1993 (!), did the following *become completely clear*. The ‘Patriarchate’ in the former Sovdepiya was *not at all an unfree, enslaved ‘Church of silence’*, as it was sometimes called. Its hierarchy had already for a very long time, *not at all under coercion*, not under pressure, but completely voluntarily and from the soul, been attempting to please the Soviet regime. They were not the ‘new martyrs’ for the Church that they presented themselves as to their flock, and which is how some observers from outside were inclined to see them. The point is that the episcopate of the ‘patriarchate’ constructed by Sergius had more and more with every succeeding generation (replenishment) *truly fraternised and become friendly with* the partocrats, the nomenklatura of the CPSS, to the extent that the nomenklatura degenerated morally and ideologically! So that the bishops of the ‘patriarchate’, and especially the highest ones, that is, those who held *real power* in the Church, became one with the partocrats *in spirit*, in their manner of thinking, even, to a large extent, in their language (the use of stock phrases from the newspapers in their sermons and speeches had been noted long before). If there is anything more despicable in the world than the Soviet ‘cultural intelligentsia’, then it can only be the episcopate of the Moscow ‘patriarchate’! The princes (and ‘princelets’) of the church, exactly like the party boyars, began to be distinguished by an unbelievable haughtiness and arrogance towards those subject to them, and by the basest servility towards those above them, surrounding themselves with houses, dacha-palaces, crowds of toady-lackeys and every kind of luxury. Just like the partocrats, the bloated bishops of the ‘patriarchate’ became *thieves from the public purse* and swindlers, and acquired an amazing capacity to look with honest, clear eyes on an interlocutor or at their flock and deliberately deceive them in the most

convincing manner. Their mendacity, their infinite mendacity almost in everything became a real second nature of the 'patriarchal' hierarchy. 'Evil communications...' If *ecumenism* made the Moscow 'patriarchate' *one* in spirit with all the heretics, and even with non-Christians, with whom it entered into spiritual communion through joint prayers, then *sergianism* made it *one* in spirit with the partocracy. Now, when the very *partocracy* has abandoned even the communist ideology that held it together, and even its own party, so as to become openly private owners of the huge resources stolen from the country and the people, and for that reason has 'rebranded' itself as *democracy*, while holding power in Russia as before, the 'patriarchate', being as before one with it, serves it on mutually beneficial terms. However, as we have seen, from now on the 'patriarchate' has started more and more openly to orient itself on the real masters of the situation – *the Jews*.

"Like all smart dealers 'of this world', the bishops of 'the patriarchate' are no longer able to maintain real ecclesiastical brotherhood and friendship in their relationships with each other. Jealousy, envy, enmity, intrigues and denunciations against each other have become *the norm* of their mutual relations. This has been transmitted to the clergy. If there are several priests in a parish, there can never be true friendship between them; jealousy and envy have become the norm. There is no point even speaking about *Christian love* among the clergy.

"'The fish begins to rot from the head.' This condition and behaviour of the hierarchy of the Moscow 'patriarchate' has been transferred, not without opposition, to the lower levels – through the middle clergy to the people, the flock, where it received the most powerful and long-lasting resistance. But with time even the flock 'gave in'. In the mass of the Christians of the churches of the 'patriarchate', mutual *love* has become extremely scarce; more and more its place has been taken by jealousy, envy and the most terrible bitterness against each other (especially on the kliroses and at the money 'desks'), a bitterness such as you will not find in secular establishments! In the last 10 years this has reached the level of pathological fear of each other in connection with suspicions of *witchcraft*! Many in the churches now fear to receive a prosphora or boiled wheat or a candle from each other... There where faith has withered there have grown up, like poisonous mushrooms, the most varied superstitions! And, you know, they really do practise witchcraft! And not only in the villages, but also in the cities, moreover completely educated people! They learn from each other methods of 'black' and 'white' magic, spells, 'charms' and 'anti-charms'. Sorcerers send their 'patients' to certain priests, and these in their turn – to sorcerers. Healer-sorcerers have appeared in the midst of the clergy... They go to him in droves, not only from the diocese, but also from other regions. The profit from it is very large. Batiushka generously shares it with the bishop, and *for that reason* the bishop does not touch him, in spite of the outrage of his brethren and some of the believers!... Suffering from spells and the evil eye have become

very widespread illnesses amongst parishioners. Medicine in such cases is useless, it cannot even establish a diagnosis. And people suffer terribly! You should see (especially in the countryside) this bewitched, hunched-up, deformed humanity! And all this is *from their own* people, as a result of envy and revenge....

“Where hatred has taken the place of love, you can say what you like, only it is not *the Church of Christ*, and especially not the Russian Orthodox Church.

“The *quality* of faith has changed to an unrecognisable extent. To put it more bluntly, among people of that social milieu where to this day they sincerely suppose that an abandoned church is very suitable for a lavatory, among people of this milieu faith has long ago been turned into some church-like *paganism*, where everything comes down to ‘sacrifices’ to God, so that He may not punish them, or give them something they are asking for. Among people of a higher cultural level, alongside this a thirst for ‘spiritual experiences’ is also noticeable. But if there is no grace of the Holy Spirit and the lofty feelings produced by it, then they are trying to *imagine* them, that is, artificially create them. The result is ‘spiritual deception’ in the form of various levels of exaltation, leading right to psychological and mental illness of one or another level. So that now among believing *intelligently* the most zealous are always – without fail and necessarily – psychologically *sick people*. On this soil especially luxuriant blooms that have flowered in the ‘patriarchate’ have been the manifestations of false ‘eldership’ and the ‘deification’ of young archimandrites by demonised hysterics. In contrast to St. John of Kronstadt, the archimandrites (igumens, hieromonks and other ‘grace-filled batiushkas’) do not drive such people away from themselves, but in every way encourage them, sometimes creating out of these female worshippers veritable bands that morally (and sometimes even physically!) terrorize the other believers. This terrible phenomenon already has a marked antichristian character. One of the female worshippers of one such archimandrite very precisely said: ‘Batiushka is our God!’ What stands behind this is the thirst to have a ‘living god’, a man-god, whom one can make an idol of in one’s life. The epoch of the ‘cult of personality’ did not pass in vain. How many hundred and thousands of souls throughout Russia have been hopelessly spoiled by this newly appeared ‘elders’, ‘grace-filled’ instructors and ‘wonder-workers’! True eldership ceased long ago. Some widely venerated monastics from the Trinity – St. Sergius Lavra, the Pskov Caves monastery, the Riga desert and other places, however one may respect them, cannot be called elders. If only because they *were silent* through all the years of Khrushchev’s mockery of the Church, and are silent now, after the speech of the ‘patriarch’ before the rabbis. Moreover, they do not bless others to speak. Why? Because the ‘patriarchate’ has constantly instilled and instills in its flock that in the Church ‘*obedience is higher than fasting and prayer*’, having forgotten to explain that this refers to the *real* Church, and not to the false one! These are undoubtedly sincere and assiduous monastics; they also take the

'patriarchate' for the Russian Orthodox Church, that is, they also *believe in the lie*, encouraging those who trust them to believe in it, too...<sup>340</sup>

"We must note that there were and still are completely honourable people in the bosom of the 'patriarchate', people who have sincerely converted to God. But they were always in the minority, and now all the more so, becoming all the time fewer, and they do not have the opportunity to *determine* Church life. Left only with their human strength, they can do little, although they present an at times exemplary model of asceticism and self-denial.

"The phenomena of spiritual deformity, canonical transgressions and moral sins are possible and, moreover, *natural* at any time of the existence of any local Church, insofar as it is a community not of 'the pure and sinless', but precisely of sinful, damaged people. The Church must therefore be a *spiritual hospital* for its members, for the flock. If the Church firmly holds to the Orthodox Faith and the holy canons 'work' in it in relation both to those above, and those below, to everyone (!), then it is a truly living organism of the Body of Christ, which is given life and raised up to God by the Holy Spirit. Then the excesses of various apostasies, crimes and transgressions of the canons in it are just that – *excesses, instances* on the background of what is *on the whole a normal and correct* life. But if the Church falls away both from the Faith and from the canonical order, it ceases to be the Body of Christ, that is, the Church, being turned into a community in which the virtues and correct conditions become occasional *exceptions*, while *the general background* and 'norm of life' turns out to be crime, apostasy and transgression... In such an inverted order of things the Church situation does not help, but *hinders* the salvation of those who trustingly enter it, it simply destroys them. Such, we see, is the situation in the Moscow 'patriarchate' to the highest degree. And so now it is extremely *unclear* what is served by the noisy opening of churches and monasteries, and the adornment of some of them in every way, and the building of Sunday schools and other institutions of the 'patriarchate'. Does all this serve for the spiritual benefit or the further spiritual *corruption* of people? Most likely, it is the broadening and deepening of the sphere of evil and destruction, a trap for those who have sincerely been drawn to Christ.

---

<sup>340</sup> According to Igumen Gregory Lourié, the role of the MP elders, and especially Archimandrite Ioann (Krestiankin) of the Pskov Caves monastery, was critical in turning the masses of the people away from ROCOR at the beginning of the 1990s. "Archimandrite Ioann not only did not approve of the opening in Russia of parishes outside the jurisdiction of the ROC MP, but he also reproached ROCOR herself as a schism: '*We have no canonical differences with the Russian Church Abroad, but we cannot now accept them on the Russian land, for they, by not recognizing our Mother Church, which lived through all the woes of Rus' with her people, are becoming, not builders up, but schismatics and destroyers of that little which has remained with us. And if you pray in a church belonging to the [Church] Abroad, you become a schismatic.*'" ("Dve Tserkvi, dve very i raznie novomucheniki. Razmyshlenia po sluchaiu konchiny arkhimandrita Ioanna (Krestiankina)" (Two Churches, two faiths and different new martyrs. Thoughts on the occasion of the death of Archimandrite Ioann (Krestiankin)", <http://portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=comment&id=915>. (V.M.)

They will not be able to strike through to Him as long as they accept the 'patriarchate' as the Orthodox Church, as long as they believe in a lie that is incompatible with the Spirit of righteousness, the Holy Spirit."<sup>341</sup>

Narochnitskaya concludes: "Do not then lose forever the true Russia which has survived through suffering," and urges ROCOR not to doom herself "as an ethnographic museum of a bygone civilization, to a display-case existence outside of Russia and Russians in world history."

These are true words: only they must be understood in a sense diametrically opposed to Narochnitskaya's understanding, perverted as it is by a pseudo-Russian, truly *Soviet* patriotism, in which crocodile tears for the supposed fall of the "proud" and "haughty" anti-unionists are mixed hypocritically with a truly demonic pride in the modern Russia's supposed virtues. By joining the MP, ROCOR will truly "lose forever the true Russia which has survived through suffering" – that is, the Russia of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors, the Russia of the Catacomb Church, which survives to this day through suffering for Christ in the jurisdictions of the True Orthodox Church. Until recent years ROCOR was always the ally and fellow-sufferer of the Catacomb Church. If she joins the MP, she will lose forever the right to associate herself with these martyrs and confessors, and will fall under their curses and anathemas. She will become merely a foreign adjunct of neo-Soviet power, a KGB listening-post in the free world, an "ethnographic museum" to which future generations of Russians will point and say: "Those are the Russians who possessed the true faith and all the advantages of living in freedom, but who chose to betray their ancestors and their Christ for a mess of pottage, for the privilege of being called 'true Russians' by KGB hierarchs and presidents".

*April 21 / May 4, 2006.*

(Published in *Vernost'*, N 51)

---

<sup>341</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia (Great Russia)*, St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 644-647 ®.

## 25. THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

*Friendship with the world is enmity with God.*  
James 4.4.

*Be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*  
Romans 12.2.

In an article entitled, "A Question from the Context of the Council", Eugene Korolev has congratulated Russian Orthodox public opinion for finally "maturing" so far as to pose "the main question of the post-Soviet period of its existence". This question, according to Korolev, has only now for the first time been posed by the Duma deputy Natalia Alexeevna Narochnitskaia in response to Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan's call that the Moscow Patriarchate should repent of its cooperation with the God-hating authorities. She formulated it as follows: "How is it possible to live in a state while having no relations with it? Christian churches live in non-Christian, Islamic states. Do they not have juridical, economic and social relations with them? It turns out that we have to repent for the fact that we lived in our fatherland. But what should the Church have done – go away into dugouts and let the people rot?"

"In fact," continues Korolev, "the members of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church live in conditions of rule by Jews. The members of the Constantinopolitan Orthodox Church live in conditions of rule by Mohammedans. The members of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad live in conditions of rule by the most various political regimes (including the experience of surviving in Hitlerite Germany and in the very 'liberal' United States). And nobody blames them for this co-existence with these far from Orthodox regimes!"

This is indeed an important question, and deserves a careful answer; for it goes to the heart of the reasons for the schism between the Moscow Patriarchate and the True Orthodox Church over the last 80-odd years. Unfortunately, Korolev himself does not help us to answer the question he himself poses. His approach is supremely facile: "In what is the 'Orthodox' Putin any worse than the 'Christian' Bush?" And he comes to the equally facile conclusion, reached after a minimum of argumentation, that the Moscow Patriarchate should indeed "repent of its cooperation with the God-haters – but only after the Church Abroad has clearly explained why it should not do the same"...

Actually, Korolev's conclusion is dishonest. The whole presupposition of his article is that the Church in both East and West had no alternative but to cooperate with the various regimes it lived under. So neither the MP nor



ROCOR has anything to repent about and they might as well forget about the whole thing and “move on from endless polemics between themselves to constructive communion and even cooperation”.

However, we cannot forget about the whole thing without denying the podvig of the thousands of holy new martyrs for whom this was indeed “the most important question” and who died because they gave a different answer to that question from Korolev’s.

What was their answer? That it was not only possible, but absolutely necessary for the salvation of their souls, to have nothing to do with the God-hating authorities. And this not out of self-will, but out of obedience to the decree of Patriarch Tikhon of January 19 / February 1, 1918 in which he anathematised the Bolsheviks and went on: “We adjure all of you, faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ, not to enter into any communion with such outcasts of the human race: ‘Remove the evil one from among you’ (I Corinthians 5.13).”

This decree was confirmed nine days later by the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, which declared: “The Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia in his epistle to the beloved in the Lord archpastors, pastors and all faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Christ has drawn the spiritual sword against the outcasts of the human race – the Bolsheviks, and anathematised them. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church adjures all her faithful children not to enter into any communion with these outcasts. For their satanic deeds they are cursed in this life and in the life to come. Orthodox! His Holiness the Patriarch has been given the right to bind and to loose according to the word of the Saviour... Do not destroy your souls, cease communion with the servants of Satan – the Bolsheviks. Parents, if your children are Bolsheviks, demand authoritatively that they renounce their errors, that they bring forth repentance for their eternal sin, and if they do not obey you, renounce them. Wives, if your husbands are Bolsheviks and stubbornly continue to serve Satan, leave your husbands, save yourselves and your children from the soul-destroying infection. An Orthodox Christian cannot have communion with the servants of the devil... Repent, and with burning prayer call for help from the Lord of Hosts and thrust away from yourselves ‘the hand of strangers’ – the age-old enemies of the Christian faith, who have declared themselves in self-appointed fashion ‘the people’s power’... If you do not obey the Church, you will not be her sons, but participants in the cruel and satanic deeds wrought by the open and secret enemies of Christian truth... Dare! Do not delay! Do not destroy your soul and hand it over to the devil and his stooges.”<sup>342</sup>

---

<sup>342</sup> "Iz sobrania Tsentral'nogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Oktyabr'skoj revoliutsii: listovka bez vykhodnykh dannykh, pod N 1011" (From the collection of the Central State Archive of the October Revolution: pamphlet without dates, under N 1011), *Nauka i Religia* (Science and

On February 7, the Council reacted to the Bolsheviks' law on the separation of Church and State as follows: "1. The decree published by the Soviet of People's Commissars regarding the separation of the Church from the State represents in itself, under the guise of a law declaring liberty of conscience, an inimical attempt upon the life of the Orthodox Church, and is an act of open persecution.

"2. All participation, either in the publication of the law so injurious to the Church, or in attempts to put it into practice, is not reconcilable with membership of the Orthodox Church, and subjects all transgressors belonging to the Orthodox communion to the heaviest penalties, to the extent of excommunicating them from the Church (in accordance with the 73<sup>rd</sup> canon of the holy Apostles, and the 13<sup>th</sup> canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council)."

In the same spirit, on April 15 the Council decreed: "Clergymen serving in anti-ecclesiastical institutions, as well as those who put into effect the decrees on freedom of conscience which are inimical to the Church and similar acts, are subject to being banned from serving and, in the case of impenitence, are deprived of their rank."<sup>343</sup>

So there can be no doubt about it: at the beginning of the revolution, the Russian Church officially, in the persons of her highest representatives, forbade her members, under threat of the most severe penalties, from "cooperating" in any significant way with the God-hating authorities. But Mr. Korolev, following Ms. Narochnitskaia, thinks this is "impossible". So we have to choose: which is the greater authority: Mr. Korolev, who thinks non-cooperation was impossible, or Patriarch Tikhon and the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, who think it was not only possible but absolutely obligatory?

\*

Korolev appears to assume that all authorities, even the Soviet ones, are lawful, all are Caesar, so that the only question is one of drawing the line between what is Caesar's and what is God's. However, the historical significance of the Russian revolution consists in the fact that here, for the first time in Christian history since Julian the Apostate, the Church encountered an authority that was not Caesar, but Pharaoh. For this was that "authority" of which the Apocalypse says that it receives its power, not from God, but from the devil (Revelation 13.2) – that is, it is the power of the Antichrist. This was the intuition proclaimed by the 1917-18 Moscow Council, which was confirmed by the first All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Church Abroad in

---

Religion), 1989, N 4; partly translated in Arfed Gustavson, *The Catacomb Church*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1960, p. 9.

<sup>343</sup> *Bogoslovskij Vestnik* (The Theological Herald), N 1, 1993, p. 217 ®.

1921, and by several Catacomb Church Councils, such as that of Ust-Kut in 1937. It defines the position of the True Church in relation to Soviet power to this day.

Of course, such an uncompromising attitude is very difficult to sustain. But Christian life is not easy; it is, by definition, the way of the Cross, the way of martyrdom. However, there are many who have trodden this path to the end.

For example, in 1918, the clairvoyant Elder Nicholas (Parthenov), later Bishop of Aktar and Hieromartyr, "following the anathema contained in the Epistle of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, and not wishing to enter into relations with 'the outcasts of the human race', went into reclusion..."<sup>344</sup> His example was followed by many Catacomb hierarchs and their flocks.

Again, during the Second World War many Catacomb Christians refused to join the Red army and fight "to defend the achievements of October", and were shot. More recently, from the early 1960s we see the movement of the "passportless" Christians, who refused to accept Soviet passports or in general to take part in Soviet life. Many were martyred, but many survive to this day in one or other of the True Orthodox jurisdictions.

Again, Yury Belov writes: "In prison I met some Orthodox priests... Most of them were True Orthodox priests, two of whom were unforgettable: Fr. John (Krivushchev) and Fr. Michael (Kalinin). They did not recognize the satanic authorities and did not want to hide that fact. On the contrary, they went along the Volga from village to village preaching that salvation would come to the world only from struggle with 'the Bolshevik devil'. They called on people not to work for the Bolsheviks, to go into the woods, not to serve in the Soviet army, and not to read satanic newspapers and books, since through them, and through the cinema and radio, 'a great deception comes'. Krivushchev is now [in 1980] serving his last 10-year sentence at the age of 80. Kalinin also is not yet free, he is now about 63. If a chekist or just a warder appeared, he would make the sign of the cross all around him and proclaim: 'Get out, satan! Out of my sight, Bolshevik filth!' He absolutely refused to talk with them and said that if everyone rejected 'these commissars' they would not remain in power even for a year..."<sup>345</sup>

This is reminiscent of the attitude of one delegate to the 1917-18 Council, who said: "If the father, mother, brothers and sisters did not receive the returning [Bolshevik] evil-doer, but expelled him, saying: 'You are a

---

<sup>344</sup> Alexis Rufimsky, "Biografia sviaschennomuchenika Nikolaia (Parfenova), episkopa Atkarskago, radi Khrista yurodivago 'malenkago batiushki'" (A Biography of Hieromartyr Nicholas (Parthenov), Bishop of Aktar, fool for Christ, 'the little batyushka'), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 17 (1782), September 1/14, 2005, p. 5.

<sup>345</sup> Belov, "Svyashchenniki v lageryakh", *Posev* (Sowing), 1980, N 5.

scoundrel, your hands are covered in blood, you are not our son, nor our brother,' the disorders would cease."<sup>346</sup>

So Korolev is simply wrong when he says that it was "impossible" to refuse to cooperate with the Soviet authorities. It was not only possible: very many followed that path. And if still more had followed it, very likely Soviet power would not have lasted so long; for the Lord says: "If My people had heard Me, if Israel had walked in My ways, quickly would I have humbled their enemies, and upon their oppressors would I have laid My hand" (Psalms 81.12-13).

\*

However, it is true, as Korolev will doubtless object, that after the first five years, 1917-22, when the Church refused to cooperate with Soviet power, a certain weakening of resolve took place. It was realised that such outright rejection of Soviet power could be sustained, on a large scale, only by *war* - and after the defeat of the White Armies in the Civil War there were no armies left to carry on the fight against the Bolsheviks. Therefore from the early 1920s a new attitude towards Soviet power began to evolve among the Tikhonite Christians: loyalty towards it as a political institution ("for all power is from God"), and acceptance of such of its laws as could be interpreted in favour of the Church (for example, the law on the separation of Church and State), combined with rejection of its atheistic world-view (large parts of which the renovationists, by contrast, accepted). In essence, this new attitude involved accepting that the Soviet State was not Antichrist, as the Local Council of 1917-18 and the Russian Church Abroad had in effect declared, but Caesar, no worse in principle than the Caesars of Ancient Rome, to whom the things belonging to Caesar were due. This attitude involved the assertion that it was possible, in the Soviet Union as in Ancient Rome, to draw a clear line between politics and religion.

But in practice, even more than in theory, this line proved very hard - in fact, impossible - to draw. For for the early Bolsheviks, at any rate, there was no such dividing line; for them, *everything* was ideological, everything had to be in accordance with their ideology, there could be no room for disagreement, no private spheres into which the state and its ideology did not pry. Thus unlike most of the Roman emperors, who allowed the Christians to order their own lives in their own way so long as they showed loyalty to the state (which the Christians were very eager to do), the Bolsheviks insisted in imposing their own ways upon the Christians in every sphere: in family life (civil marriage only, divorce on demand, children spying on parents), in education (compulsory Marxism), in economics (dekulakization, collectivization), in military service (the oath of allegiance to Lenin), in science (Lysenkoism), in art (socialist realism), and in religion (the requisitioning of

---

<sup>346</sup> *Deiania Sobora* (The Acts of the Council), vol. 6, p. 40.

valuables, registration, commemoration of the authorities at the Liturgy, reporting of confessions by the priests). Resistance to any one of these demands was counted as "anti-Soviet behaviour", i.e. *political* disloyalty. Therefore it was no use protesting one's political loyalty to the regime if one refused to accept just one of these demands. According to the Soviet interpretation of the word: "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one has become guilty of all of it" (James 2.10), such a person was an *enemy of the people*.

In view of this, it is not surprising that many Christians came to the conclusion that there was no gain, and from a moral point of view much to be lost, in accepting a regime that made such impossible demands, since the penalty would be the same whether one asserted one's loyalty to it or not. And if this meant living as an outlaw, so be it...

Nevertheless, the path of total rejection of the Soviet state required enormous courage, strength and self-sacrifice, not only for oneself but also (which was more difficult) for one's family or flock. It is therefore not surprising that the Church began to soften her anti-Soviet rhetoric and try once more to draw the line between politics and religion. This is what Patriarch Tikhon tried to do in the later years of his patriarchate - with, it must be said, only mixed results. Thus his decision to allow some, but not all of the Church's valuables to be requisitioned by the Bolsheviks in 1922 not only did not bring help to the starving of the Volga, as was the intention, but led to many clashes between believers and the authorities and thousands of deaths of believers. For, as no less an authority than the holy Elder Nectarius of Optina said: "You see now, the patriarch gave the order to give up all valuables from the churches, but they belonged to the Church!"<sup>347</sup>

---

<sup>347</sup> Matushka Evgenia Grigorievna Rymarenko, "Remembrances of Optina Staretz Hieroschemamonk Nektary", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 36, N 3, May-June, 1986, p. 39. One concession to the Antichrist invariably leads to others. Thus on February 24, 1923 the GPU agent Jacob Savlovich Agranov forced the Patriarch to make further concessions on this issue. "From the point of view of the Bolsheviks," writes N. Krivova, "Tikhon's epistle of February 28, 1922 was incorrect juridically speaking, for according to the decree of 1918 on the separation of the Church from the State Church property passed to the State and was declared the heritage of the State. Tikhon testified that in the Church canons there are no indications to the effect that State power in the event of the confiscation of Church valuables during popular disturbances should turn to the Church authorities for agreement. Although of course the Patriarch very well understood that the valuables taken from the Church would not be used for aid to the starving. And nevertheless he declared that the Soviet government need not turn to the Patriarch for agreement to the requisitioning. They managed to get an analogous testimony from the Patriarch's closest colleague, Archbishop Nicander (Fenomenov).

"Thus the GPU obtained a most important testimony from the Patriarch to the effect that he was guilty in issuing an appeal with regard to the requisitioning of Church valuables, that the use of the Church valuables for the needs of the starving was not sacrilege and did not contradict the Church canons" (*Vlast' i Tserkov' v 1922-1925gg.* (The Authorities and the Church in 1922-1925), Moscow, 1997).

Again, in 1923 the patriarch claimed that he was no longer an enemy of Soviet power, dissociated himself from the Church Abroad and sought to annul the 1918 anathema against Soviet power.

This act was criticized by many in the Church. Nevertheless, it was generally recognized that, by contrast with the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius four years later, Patriarch Tikhon's actions never went beyond the boundary separating membership of the Church from apostasy. Thus he never went so far as to recognize Soviet power as God-established, or to praise communism, or to identify the Church's joys and sorrows with communism's joys and sorrows – all of which Metropolitan Sergius and his successors did. As Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky) writes: "How expedient this way of acting was is another question,... but in any case Patriarch Tikhon did not cross that boundary which had to separate him, as head of the Russian Orthodox Church, from the godless power."<sup>348</sup> Moreover, we must never forget that the patriarch's motivation was to protect his flock from the terrible consequences of communion with Soviet power by taking the sin of communion with that power upon himself.

In any case, there can be no question, as some sergianists have asserted, that this showed that the 1917-18 anathema was "invalid". For Patriarch Tikhon did not have the right to annul the 1918 anathema himself, since it was a decree of the highest organ of the Church, the Church Council, which only a later Church Council of a still higher authority could annul. Actually, there is strong evidence that the patriarch himself recognized this, and only "repented" of the anathema in order to buy space and time from the authorities. As he wrote to Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky): "I wrote this for the authorities, but you sit and work."<sup>349</sup> In other words, the Church was not to take his words seriously...

The decision to negotiate and compromise with the Bolsheviks only brought confusion and division to the Church. Thus on the right wing of the Church there were those, like Archbishop Theodore of Volokolamsk, who thought that the patriarch had already gone too far; while on the left wing there were those, like Archbishop Hilarion of Verey, who wanted to go further.

The basic problem was that the compromises were always one-sided; the Bolsheviks always took and never gave; their aim was not peaceful co-existence, but the complete conquest of the Church. And so, as a "Letter from Russia" put it many years later: "It's no use our manoeuvring: there's nothing for us to preserve except the things that are God's. For the things that are

---

<sup>348</sup> Rklitsky, *Zhizneopisanie Blazhenneishago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago* (Biography of his Beatitude Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galich), New York, 1960, vol. 6, p. 152.

<sup>349</sup> *Izvestia*, June 12, 1924; Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 577.

Caesar's (if one should really consider it to be Caesar and not Pharaoh) are always associated with the quenching of the Spirit..."<sup>350</sup>

However, the Patriarchal Church remained Orthodox under Patriarch Tikhon and his successor, Metropolitan Peter, for two major reasons: first, because the leaders of the Church did not sacrifice the lives of their fellow Christians for the sake of their own security or the security of the Church organisation; and secondly, because, while the Soviet regime was recognised to be, in effect, Caesar rather than Pharaoh, no concessions were made with regard to the communist *ideology*. Metropolitan Sergius, on the other hand, did both these things: he called his opponents "counter-revolutionaries", thereby in effect condemning them to death; and he identified the interests of the Church with the interests of the God-hating State. Nothing could excuse these Judas-like acts...

\*

Let us now turn to the situation outside Russia, in the free world. The word "free" here is no misnomer; and while it has become fashionable to downgrade the value of freedom (among those who wish to justify their enslavement), there can be no question but that it is a most precious gift given by God. As Metropolitan Anastasy wrote to General Eisenhower in August, 1945: "The Russians are nostalgic for their homeland. If, in spite of this, they still prefer to remain in a foreign land, having no domicile, often hungry and with no juridical defence, this is only for one reason: they want to preserve the greatest value on earth – freedom: freedom of conscience, freedom of the word, the right to property and personal security."

The freedom of conscience and freedom of the word are especially important. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said before Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18.37). God gave freedom of the word to the Russian Church Abroad to imitate Christ in bearing witness to the truth; and until the recent tragic events she fulfilled that task, not only proclaiming the truth about the Church inside Russia – while the official church inside Russia was uttering the most appalling lies that any Orthodox Church hierarchy has ever uttered, but also bringing the truth of the Orthodox faith to many thousands of unenlightened westerners.

Korolev hints that the Russian Church Abroad was somehow contaminated by living in the West, "by the experience of surviving in Hitlerite Germany and in the very 'liberal' United States". He produces no evidence for this disgusting insinuation for the simple reason that he cannot. The libel that ROCOR cooperated with Hitlerite Germany to the extent of approving its ideology or its cruelties has been exposed many times in other

---

<sup>350</sup> *Russkaia Mysl'* (Russian Thought), N 3143, March 17, 1977.

publications: I prefer here to deal with the accusation that ROCOR was somehow contaminated by the liberalism of the United States.

Let us consider some forms of American liberalism. The most obvious is democratism, the belief that the only moral form of politics is democratic politics. Has ROCOR ever adopted this ideology? Never. On the contrary, in the writings of a whole series of distinguished hierarchs and theologians (Archbishop Averky, Bishop Gregory Grabbe, Archimandrite Cyril Zaitsev) precisely the opposite ideology, that of monarchism, has been proclaimed from the rooftops. Meanwhile, the MP was preaching democratism in its most extreme, satanic form – communism. As late as the 1980s Patriarch Pimen was advocating “a return to Leninist norms”. And on July 4/17, 1990, when thousands of ordinary people were throwing in their party cards, Patriarch Alexis II announced publicly that he was praying for the preservation of the communist party!

Korolev will perhaps point to the fact that ROCOR under Metropolitan Philaret supported the Americans in Vietnam. And why not? Support for the anti-communist struggle did not mean supporting all means employed in that struggle, nor admiration for all its leaders.

Another form of liberalism is permissiveness to all kinds of immoral sexual behaviour, such as homosexuality. Has ROCOR ever approved of homosexuality? Never. Or any of the other perversions that are preached today? Never. And yet the MP, by its tolerance towards the homosexuality of all its leading metropolitans, has displayed a “liberalism” which is breathtaking. And which makes its fulminations against the liberal West breathtakingly hypocritical...

Perhaps the most important form of liberalism rampant in the United States and the western world in general is liberalism in matters of the faith, that is, *ecumenism*. And yet, taking advantage of her God-given freedom of the word, ROCOR has not only condemned, but formally anathematized all participants in the ecumenical movement. Meanwhile, the MP even now, long after the fall of the Soviet regime, takes an active part in the ecumenical movement.

Consider, for example, the following from the report of Priest Victor Dobrov to the recent May, 2006 Sobor in San Francisco about the ecumenical activity of the MP: “Just recently, from February 14-23 of this year in Porto Alegre, Brazil the regular 9<sup>th</sup> ecumenical Assembly of the WCC took place.

“The Russian Church (MP) at this Assembly was unusually imposing with more than 20 members in its delegation.



“The Summary Document, adopted and ratified by the participants of this ecumenical Assembly, and particularly by the Moscow Patriarchate in the face of its representatives, is the Document PRC 01.1 entitled “The Teaching on the Church: Called to be a United Church”.

“A careful study of this Document casts doubt on the multitude of statements made by the representatives of the Moscow side, that the objective of the continued membership of the Patriarchate in the WCC is the uncompromising witnessing to the Truth to the heterodox world. Moreover, this document evokes doubt in the Orthodoxy of the confession of the faith of the Moscow Patriarchate itself. The entire adopted Document is heretical from beginning to end, but because of the lack of time for a thorough examination, we will focus only on the most glaring evidence.

“Let us refer to the text of the Document:

“One may call the following assertion in the Document a theological breakthrough, yet it is far from Orthodox thinking:

“‘All who have been baptized into Christ are united with Christ in his body’. (III,8) (*i.e. in the Church of Christ!*)

“It is completely unequivocal, simple and comprehensible! Since nowhere in the remainder of the Document is it stated that this implies baptism with the obligatory participation of the one being baptized in the Eucharist which is in the Orthodox Church, therefore now there is every basis to consider the Moscow Patriarchate as already being of one body with Protestants...

“Our Orthodox consciousness is amazed and startled by the ecumenical statement adopted by the Moscow Patriarchate on recognizing the grace and genuineness of baptisms carried out in heretical communities!”<sup>351</sup>

So even in the sphere of ecumenism, the most typical and most serious manifestation of American liberalism, the MP appears to be far more liberal than ROCOR!

\*

To conclude: Korolev demonstrates a slavish adherence to the basic principle of sergianism: that the Church must conform to the world. Ignoring the writings of the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers, the decisions of the 1917-18 Moscow Council, and the witness of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia, he thinks that the Church had no choice but to compromise with communism.

---

<sup>351</sup> Dobrov, at [http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print\\_page&pid=913](http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=913).

As if this blasphemy were not enough, he compounds it with slander, claiming that ROCOR conformed to the diseases of the western world as seriously as the MP conformed to Leninism, whereas in fact the MP has shown itself thoroughly infected by westernism while not even living in the West!

The whole world lies in evil, as the Apostle John says. However, it is possible to live in this evil world while not being of the world, and without betraying one's Christian conscience. The True Orthodox Church of Russia – that is, ROCOR and the Catacomb Church - demonstrated that this was possible both in the conditions of Soviet communism and western liberalism and ecumenism: the MP has failed the test in both conditions.

10/23 May, 2006.

(Published in *Vernost'*, N 52)

## **26. THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE**

The approach of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, always an important event in the Church's calendar, is rendered all the more important this year by the planned union of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia under Metropolitan Lavr (ROCOR) with her supposed "mother" inside Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), which lies under many anathemas of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Not coincidentally, perhaps, we have recently witnessed a sustained attack on the nature of the anathematisms pronounced on this Sunday on the part of certain supporters of this union. For clearly the supporters of union wish to lull the members of the ROCOR into a false sense of security, into a feeling that the fearsome anathematisms pronounced on this Sunday will not apply to them if they are joined to the MP – a feeling which, as I shall now try to show with the help of God, is, tragically, *completely unfounded*.

The supporters of union characteristically employ one or all of the following tactics in various combinations, some of which are mutually inconsistent with each other: (1) a redefinition of the meaning and use of the word "anathema" in such a way as to limit, or radically distort, its significance; (2) a caviling at individual anathemas so as to prove their invalidity, incompetence, narrowness of application and lack of universality in space or time; and (3) a reinterpretation of the current state and status of the MP in such a way as to prove that it does not fall under any of the anathemas in question, even if they were valid. I shall approach each of these tactics in turn.

### **1. The Meaning and Use of the Word "Anathema".**

A common tactic used is to declare that anathemas do not constitute expulsion from the Church in the full sense, but rather *warnings* about false doctrine.

The falseness of this argument was shown by St. John Maximovich, who, after explaining the use of the words "anathema" in the New Testament, wrote: "In the acts of the Councils and the further course of the New Testament Church, the word 'anathema' came to mean complete separation from the Church. 'The Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes', 'let him be anathema', 'let it be anathema', means a complete tearing away from the Church. While in cases of 'separation from the communion of the Church' and other epitimias or penances laid on a person, the person remained a member of the Church, even though his participation in her grace-filled life was limited, those given over to anathema were thus completely torn away from her until their repentance. Realizing that she is unable to do anything for their salvation, in view of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, the earthly

Church lifts them up to the judgement of God. That judgement is merciful unto repentant sinners, but fearsome for the stubborn enemies of God. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God... for our God is a consuming fire' (Hebrews 10.31; 12.29)."<sup>352</sup>

Sometimes it is added that only God can expel from the Church, which is clearly false, in that Christ God specifically entrusted His True Church with the power to bind and to loose (Matthew 18.18; John 20.23) – that is, to retain people as members of the Church or to expel them from Her (provided, of course, that She exercises this power with justice and discernment).

Other variations on this tactic include the theory that anathemas anathematize, not individual men or churches, but teachings of men and churches, which again is clearly false, in that the Apostle Paul's anathemas (I Corinthians 16.22; Galatians 1.8,9) are directed against people, as are many of the anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils.

Again it is asserted that anathemas anathematize nobody if specific names are not mentioned, which would imply that the Apostle Paul's anathemas, as well as many of those of the Ecumenical Councils and those more recent anathemas pronounced on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, are all just a pompous form of game-playing and not to be taken seriously.

No, the matter is extremely serious. And no amount of Jesuitical circumvention of the plain meaning of the word "anathema", and of the obvious significance of the formula: "*To all those who teach.... **Anathema***", can deny that in all true anathemas, whether with names or without them, *somebody is anathematized*, that is, cut off from the Church. For the word of anathema is no less than "the word of God, quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit..." (Hebrews 6.12).

## 2. Cavilling at the Scope of Individual Anathematisms.

If it is accepted that a given anathema does apply to people, and not only to teachings, and that it does in fact separate people from the Church, and not simply warn them about a possible falling-away, the next tactic usually employed is to attempt to limit the scope of the anathema. This can be done either by mocking the small number of bishops involved, or by asserting that a synod of bishops, however large, can only anathematize those within its jurisdiction. One variant of this ploy is to assert that one Local Church cannot anathematize another.

---

<sup>352</sup> St. John Maximovich, "The Word 'Anathema' and its Meaning", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 27, March-April, 1977, pp. 18-19.

Those who assert this are usually thinking of the ROCOR's anathema against ecumenism in 1983, which supporters of union with the MP like to think applies only to members of the ROCOR, contrary to its obviously universal scope and wording. Of course, many anathemas are formulated in the first place against heretics living within the jurisdiction of the bishops who pronounce them. But that in no way limits the application of such anathemas to those heretics, and those alone; and still less does it mean that there is a "heresy of universal jurisdiction", as one ROCOR priest has put it.

Concerning this so-called "heresy of universal jurisdiction, I wrote some years ago: "An anathema excludes the person anathematized from the holy mysteries, from membership of the Holy Church. In the first place, of course, that applies to the local Church of which that person is a member. It applies to other Churches only to the extent that the leaders of those other Churches agree with the original anathema and "sign up to it", as it were. Thus the heretic Arius was originally anathematized by the Bishop of Alexandria, which meant that he was excluded from receiving the sacraments throughout the Church of Alexandria. However, not all the bishops of neighbouring Churches agreed with this anathema, so Arius was able to receive communion in other Local Churches. To this extent the anathema was only of local significance. It required the convening of the First Ecumenical Council before Arius was anathematized "universally" - and even then, the anathema was not universally received, as the history of the Church in the next fifty years demonstrates.

"It is a different matter when we consider an anathema sub specie aeternitatis, in its mystical, super-terrestrial significance. From that point of view, the anathematization of a heretic begins in the heavens. Thus even before Arius had been "locally" anathematized by St. Alexander of Alexandria, the Lord appeared to his predecessor, St. Peter, with a torn cloak, and in answer to St. Peter's question: 'O Creator, who has torn Thy tunic?', replied: 'The mindless Arius; he has separated from Me people whom I had obtained with My Blood'.<sup>353</sup>

"So not only Arius, but all those who followed him, had been separated from the Church by the anathema of Her First Bishop, the Lord Jesus Christ, years (or rather, aeons) before even the first "local" anathema had been uttered. All heresies and heretics are anathematized "from all eternity" by the eternal Lord, for just as every truth is approved by the Truth Himself from all eternity, so is every lie condemned by Him from all eternity, being condemned with "the father of lies" to the gehenna of fire (Revelation 22.15).

"The task of hierarchs on earth is to discern the decisions of the heavenly Church, and then apply these eternal and heavenly decisions on earth, in space and time. As St. Bede the Venerable (+735) writes: "The keys of the

---

<sup>353</sup> St. Dmitri of Rostov, *Lives of the Saints*, November 25.

Kingdom designate the actual knowledge and power of discerning who are worthy to be received into the Kingdom, and who should be excluded from it as being unworthy".<sup>354</sup> From this point of view, it matters not a jot whether a heretic is anathematized locally or universally, since he has already been anathematized by the heavenly Church. Or rather, it matters in this sense: that if the heretic has been anathematized locally, but this anathema is not accepted by the rest of the Church, then the rest of the Church is under the grave danger of falling under this same anathema. For the local anathema, if it is just, is the reflection of a heavenly anathema; and the anathema of the heavenly Church is universal....

"This explains why, when local Churches anathematized a heresy, they never qualified the anathema ... by saying: 'but of course, this applies only to the heretics in our local Church'. On the contrary: history shows that local Churches freely anathematized heretics, not only in their own Churches, but also in others. Thus Nestorius, a heretic of the Church of Constantinople, was first condemned by a local Synod of the Church of Rome under St. Celestine; the Monothelite heretics were first condemned by a local Synod, again, of the Church of Rome; and the Papist heretics were first condemned by a local Synod of the Church of Constantinople.

"Consider what St. Maximus said of the Monothelites: 'In addition to having excommunicated themselves from the Church, they have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?'

"Note that the saint says that the heretics have excommunicated themselves; for as the Apostle Paul writes, 'he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself' (Titus 3.11). But the heretics' self-condemnation and self-exclusion from the Church as a mystical organism [here I borrow a distinction between the Church as a mystical organism and the Church as an external organization from the Catacomb Hieromartyr Bishop Mark of Sergiev Posad (+1938)] must be followed by their exclusion from the Church as an external organization, lest others be infected with their heresy. Hence the need for councils of bishops to anathematize them, following the rule: 'A heretic after the first and second admonition reject' (Titus 3.10), and: 'If he refuses to listen to the Church, let him be unto you as a heathen and a publican' (Matthew 18.17). And clearly St. Maximus considered that the anathema of the local Church of Rome had validity throughout the Ecumenical Church.

"Administrative matters and moral falls are the business of local Churches and councils. However, heresies of their very nature are of universal significance, having the potential to infect the whole Church. That is why the

---

<sup>354</sup> St. Bede, *Sermon on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul*, P.L. 94, col. 219.

appearance of a heresy in one local Church is not the business only of that local Church, but of all the local Churches - and every local Church can and must anathematize it.

“Even the anathema of single bishopric or metropolitanate has universal power and validity if it is uttered in the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the eternal Truth. Thus in 1069 the bishops of the metropolitanate of York, in the north of England, solemnly anathematized both the Pope of Rome and his stooge, William the conqueror, the first papist king of England. All the evidence is that they did not know that the Church of Constantinople had already anathematized Rome in 1054. So they were not simply confirming the word of a higher authority. They did not need a higher authority. They were successors of the apostles, with the power to bind and to loose. And they used that power, not for personal gain (on the contrary: they paid for their boldness with their lives), even against the most senior bishop in Christendom...

“In the same way, in 1983 the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad, using the power to bind and to loose given them by the Bishop of bishops, the Lord Jesus Christ, translated onto earth, into space and time, the completely binding and universally applicable decision already arrived at from all eternity by the Council of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Ecumenism is, was and always will be a heresy, indeed "the heresy of heresies", and the ecumenist heretics are, were and always will be outside the Church, the mystical Body of Christ. The decision of the ROCOR Sobor in 1983, confirmed with no change to its universal wording in 1998, expelled these already self-condemned and Divinely condemned heretics also from the external organization of the Church - and woe to any man, of whatever Church, who despises that decision, for he will then surely fall under the same anathema..."<sup>355</sup>

Parallel to the theory that anathemas are not universal in space is the theory that they are not universal in time either, that they have a “sell-by date”, after which they need to be “reapplied” by “living” Synods of bishops. In answer to this we reply in the words of the Lord: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matthew 22.32), and his true bishops, together with the words of truth and power that they pronounce, live for ever. In any case, are not the anathemas of the Ecumenical Councils “reapplied” by “living Synods of bishops” every year on the Sunday of Orthodoxy? And not because these anathemas have somehow “died out” in the course of the previous year (what a blasphemous thought!), but precisely so that the people should not forget their eternal significance and should, by pronouncing them themselves, take care that they should not “fall under their own anathema” by participating in heresy and the communion of heretics.

---

<sup>355</sup> V. Moss, “Re: [paradosis] The Heresy of Universal Jurisdiction”, [orthodox-tradition@egroups.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@egroups.com), October 12, 2000.

### 3. The MP and the Anathemas.

Let us now turn to some specific anathemas as they apply to the MP:-

**a. The anathemas against Sergianism.** Metropolitan Philaret of New York (+1985) wrote of the MP: "This false church has been twice anathematised. His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon and the All-Russian Church Council anathematised the communists and all their co-workers. This terrible anathema has not been lifted to this day and preserves its power, since it can be lifted only by an All-Russian Church Council, as being the canonically higher Church authority. And a terrible thing happened in 1927, when the leader of the Church, Metropolitan Sergius, by his shameful apostate declaration submitted the Russian Church to the Bolsheviki and declared that he was cooperating with them. In the most exact sense the expression of the prayer before confession was fulfilled: 'fallen under his own anathema'! For in 1918 the Church anathematised all the co-workers of communism, and in 1927 she herself entered into the company of these co-workers and began to praise the red God-fighting authorities – to praise the red beast of which the Apocalypse speaks. And this is not all. When Metropolitan Sergius published his criminal declaration, the faithful children of the Church immediately separated from the Soviet church, and the Catacomb Church was created. And she in her turn anathematised the official church for her betrayal of Christ... We receive clergymen from Moscow not as ones possessing grace, but as ones receiving it by the very act of union. But to recognize the church of the evil-doers as the bearer and repository of grace – that we, of course, cannot do. For outside of Orthodoxy there is *no* grace; and the Soviet church has deprived itself of grace."<sup>356</sup>

Of course, many will say that all this is in the past, since communism has fallen in Russia. But since when does a change of political regime make a heretic Orthodox without his repentance? In any case, there is abundant evidence that if the communist regime has fallen, Sovietism has by no means fallen. When Fr. Dmitri Dudko praises Stalin, do his bishops rebuke him? They do not. When KGB President Putin toasts Stalin and restores the red flag to the armed forces, does the official church protest? Not a murmur... Russia is going back to the Soviet Union (if it ever really left it), and the MP is going along with that (because it never left it).

**b. The anathemas of the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils against the Monophysite heresy.** In 1990, in Chambesy,

---

<sup>356</sup> "A Letter from Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) to a Priest of the Church Abroad concerning Father Dimitry Dudko and the Moscow Patriarchate", *Vertograd-Inform*, N 4, February, 1999, pp. 16-20. A few years earlier, on August 14/27, 1977, Metropolitan Philaret told the present writer: "I advise you always to remain faithful to the anathema of the Catacomb Church against the Moscow Patriarchate."



Switzerland, the Monophysites agreed to take “a positive attitude” to, although without officially accepting, the last Four Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers who took part in them, and to lift their anathemas against them; while the Orthodox agreed to lift their anathemas against all the Monophysite councils and fathers, including the notorious heresiarchs Dioscurus, Timothy and Severus. Thus both “families of Churches” (a new phrase unknown to Orthodox ecclesiology) agreed that “all the anathemas and condemnations of the past which divide us should be lifted by the Churches in order that the last obstacle to the full unity and communion of our two families can be removed by the grace and power of God.”

But this meant that all the six hundred and thirty holy Fathers who uttered these anathemas and condemnations were wrong!

Of course, the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches (with the exception of Jerusalem) have already *implicitly* rejected the Councils and the Fathers by their communion in prayer and the sacraments with all sorts of heretics, and even pagans, the WCC General Assembly in Canberra in 1991 being perhaps the most extreme example. Nevertheless, it is a further and important stage to say *explicitly* that the Ecumenical Councils were *wrong*, that the Monophysites should not have been condemned, that they were Orthodox all these centuries although the Holy Fathers and all the saints of the Orthodox Church considered them to be heretics. This is not simply a failure to come up to the standards of the Ecumenical Councils: *it is a renunciation of the standards themselves*. In essence, the Local Orthodox Churches here placed themselves under the anathemas against Monophysitism from the Fourth Ecumenical Council onwards, and must be considered to be “semi-Monophysites”.

**c. The anathemas of the Constantinopolitan Councils of 1054 and the 1340s against Roman Catholicism.** In 1965, the Constantinopolitan Church “lifted” the 1054 anathema against the Roman Catholics, and the MP did not demur, but in 1969 decided to give communion to Catholics in certain circumstances, an act which was defined by the ROCOR Synod as “heretical”.

In 1994 the Moscow Patriarchate and other Local Orthodox churches signed the Balamand agreement with the Catholics, in which the Orthodox and the Catholics were declared to be sister-Churches in the full sense, “two lungs” of the same organism (with the Monophysites as a “third lung”?). The Balamand Agreement, which was signed on the Orthodox side by Moscow, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Romania, Cyprus, Poland and Finland, declared: “Catholics and Orthodox... are once again discovering each other as sister churches” and “recognizing each other as sister churches”. “On each side it is acknowledged that what Christ has entrusted to His Church – the profession of the apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, the apostolic succession of bishops, and, above all, the one priesthood celebrating the one Sacrifice of Christ – cannot be considered to be the exclusive property

of one of our Churches." The baptism of penitent papists into the Orthodox Church was prohibited: "All rebaptism (sic) is prohibited." The Orthodox Church "recognizes the Catholic Church in her entirety as a sister Church, and indirectly recognizes also the Oriental Catholic Churches" (the Uniates). "Special attention should be given on both sides to the preparation and education of future priests with regard to the new ecclesiology, (that they may) be informed of the apostolic succession of the other Church and the authenticity of its sacramental life, (so that) the use of history in a polemical manner (may be avoided)".

This was an official acceptance of the "branch theory" of the Church, and therefore also fell under:

#### **d. The Anathema of the ROCOR Synod against Ecumenism.**

Some will say that the MP has extracted itself from under this anathema because, in the document on relations with the heterodox accepted at the 2000 Sobor, it was declared that "the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ, created by our Lord and Saviour Himself; it is the Church established by, and filled with, the Holy Spirit..." "The Church of Christ is one and unique..." "The so-called 'branch theory', which affirms the normality and even the providentiality of the existence of Christianity in the form of separate 'branches'... is completely unacceptable."

But, wrote Protopriest Michael Ardov, "the 'patriarchal liberals' will also not be upset, insofar as the heretics in the cited document are called 'heterodox', while the Monophysite communities are called the 'Eastern Orthodox Churches'. And the 'dialogues with the heterodox' will be continued, and it is suggested that the World Council of Churches be not abandoned, but reformed..."<sup>357</sup> Moreover, immediately after the Council, on August 18, "Patriarch" Alexis prayed together with the Armenian "Patriarch".

The Church does not accept words unless they are accompanied by deeds. Saying that the Church of Christ is only the Orthodox Church, but continuing to remain in the World Council of Churches, which officially declares the opposite, is hypocritical and would never have been accepted by the Holy Fathers, who insisted not only that Orthodoxy be proclaimed but also that the heretics be anathematised.

Until the MP breaks all ecumenical relations with, and anathematizes, both the RCs and the Monophysites publicly, as well as the agreements of Chambesey and Balamand and all participants in the World Council of Churches, they remain under the anathemas of the Holy Fathers. It is here

---

<sup>357</sup> Ardov, "The 'Jubilee Council' has confirmed it: the Moscow Patriarchate has finally fallen away from Orthodoxy" (Report read at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the clergy, monastics and laity of the Suzdal diocese of the Russian Orthodox [Autonomous] Church, November, 2000).

that “reapplying” the anathemas by “living” Synods of bishops makes sense and is necessary. Not because the anathemas of the Holy Fathers need reinforcing, but to show that we are in accordance with them, and are members of the same Church, the Church of the living God.

#### **e. The Anathemas against Judaism.**

In his famous speech before the rabbis of New York on November 13, 1991, “Patriarch” Alexis, alias KGB agent Drozdov, said: “Dear brothers, shalom to you in the name of the God of love and peace!... We are all brothers, for we are all children of the Old Testament on Mount Sinai, which, as we Christians believe, was renewed by Christ... Your law is our law, your prophets are our prophets.”

The patriarch confessed that “we are one with the Jews, without renouncing Christianity and not in spite of Christianity, but in the name of and by dint of Christianity, while the Jews are one with us not in spite of Judaism, but in the name of and by dint of true Judaism. We are separated from the Jews because we are not yet completely Christian, while the Jews are separated from us because they are not yet completely Jews. For the fullness of Christianity embraces both itself and Judaism, while the fullness of Judaism is Christianity... The Jewish people are near to us in faith. Your law is our law, your prophets are our prophets.”

The patriarch called on the Jews to work together to build “the new world order”: “by our joint efforts we shall build a new society – a democratic, free, open, just society... where Jews would live with Christians in security and peace, in an atmosphere of friendship, creative brotherhood and the brotherhood of the children of the one God, the Father of all, the God of your fathers and of ours.”<sup>358</sup>

So the KGB Patriarch is going to work with the Jews for “the new world order”, considering himself a brother of the rabbis whose sacred book, the Talmud, calls Christ a magician, the son of a harlot and a Roman soldier! Has he forgotten that God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, said that the Jews were not the children of God, but of the devil (John 8.44)?! Does he not remember that the Apostle John said that those who reject the Son do not have the Father either (I John 2.22)?!

Have we not returned to the time, around the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the head of the Russian Church was a secret Judaizer? Only is it not much worse now, in that this Judaizer does not hide his Judaism, and the church which he heads make no attempt to oppose or depose him?

---

<sup>358</sup> *The Speech of Patriarch Alexis II to the Rabbis of New York on 13 November, 1991 and the Heresy of the Judaizers*, TOO “Pallada”, Moscow, 1992, pp. 8-10 (in Russian).

Let us remind ourselves how the true metropolitans of Moscow and saints of Russia dealt with the Jews: "The polemic began... in the time of Metropolitan Peter (+1326), the founder of the Muscovite ecclesiastical centre. In the life of St. Peter it is mentioned among his other exploits for the good of the Russian Church that he 'overcame the heretic Seit in debate and anathematised him.' The hypothesis concerning the Karaite origin of the 'Judaizers' allows us to see in Seit a Karaite preacher.

"... The heresy did not disappear but smouldered under a facade of church life in certain circles of the Orthodox urban population, and the Russian church, under the leadership of her hierarchs, raised herself to an unceasing battle with the false teachings. The landmarks of this battle were: Metropolitan Peter's victory over Seit in debate (between 1312 and 1326), the unmasking and condemnation of the strigolniki in Novgorod in the time of Metropolitan Alexis (1370s), the overcoming of this heresy in the time of Metropolitan Photius (+1431), and of the heresy of the Judaizers - in the time of Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod (+1505) and St. Joseph of Volotsk (+1515)."<sup>359</sup>

Archbishop Andrew of Rockland (+1978) saw a close link between the heresy of the Judaizers and the Russian revolution because both represented the triumph of Jewish ways of thinking. The present-day Moscow Patriarchate, far from cleansing Russia of Judaism, has presented an exhausted Russia on a plate to the international Jewish society that we know of as "the new world order". What a mockery of the exploit of the holy new martyrs and confessors of Russia, and what a lesson for us all!

To us, who witness the triumph, not only of sergianism and ecumenism, but even of God-hating Judaism in the heart of the formerly holy Russia, the words of the holy Apostle Paul to the Judaizing Christians of his day have never been more relevant:

*Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be **anathema**!*

*February 12/25, 2004.  
St. Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow.*

---

<sup>359</sup> *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, Publication of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1988, p. 25 (in Russian).

## 27. ROCOR AND THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

The minutes of the meeting of ROCOR's Hierarchical Synod on February 9/22, 2006 contain the following revealing paragraph: "We heard: Archbishop Mark's report on the necessity of a trip to Romania and Bulgaria in order to discuss with Metropolitan Vlasii and Bishop Fotii our relations with the Synod of Metropolitan Cyprian. It is necessary to deliver to them a copy of our latest correspondence with Metropolitan Cyprian, and also to try to convince them to enter into contact with the Local Churches of their countries for possible regularization of their canonical status with the preservation by them of the right to adhere to the Julian (Old) Church Calendar" (Orthodox Life, no. 6, 2006, p. 47).

This represents a dramatic step backwards in ROCOR's confession of faith even by comparison with its position in 1994, when it entered into communion with Metropolitan Cyprian, and constitutes in effect a call to the Old Calendar Churches of Romania and Bulgaria to abandon their confession of faith and join apostate World Orthodoxy. Logically, ROCOR must now recognize that its (already weakened) confession of faith in 1994 - the idea that it and its sister-Churches in Greece, Romania and Bulgaria were right to "wall themselves off" from World Orthodoxy in accordance with the holy canons - was a mistake.

In 1994, when ROCOR entered into official communion with Metropolitan Cyprian and officially accepted his ecclesiology, many said that this meant a significant change in ROCOR's stance vis-a-vis World Orthodoxy, and in particular a change from the position enunciated clearly under Metropolitan Philaret in 1983, when ecumenism and the ecumenists were anathematized. In fact, in an "Informatory Epistle" published by Metropolitan Cyprian in 1998, he clearly shows that his Synod does *not* recognize ROCOR's anathema against ecumenism. He writes: "3 (c) The right to issue an anathema does not belong to ecclesiastical administrative bodies which have a temporary synodal structure, but which do not possess all the canonical prerequisites to represent the Church fully, validly, and suitably for the proclamation of an anathema - a right and 'dignity' which is 'granted' only to the choir of the Apostles 'and those who have truly become their successors in the strictest sense, full of Grace and power... 5 (a) The extremely serious implication of an anathema, coupled, first, with the absence, in our day, of a synodal body endowed with all of the aforementioned canonical prerequisites or proclaiming an anathema and, secondly, with the immense confusion that prevails, on account of ecumenism, in the ranks of the local Orthodox Churches, constitute, today, a major restraint on, and an insurmountable impediment to, such a momentous and, at the same time, historic action."

Since Metropolitan Cyprian considers that the right to anathematize belongs only to the Apostles "and those who have truly become their successors in the strictest sense", and refuses to accept ROCOR's anathema of

1983, we can only conclude that he does not regard the ROCOR Synod under Metropolitan Philaret to have been successors of the Apostles, and that in fact there is *no* Church in the world today competent to bind and to loose - which, as Gabriel and Helena Lawani have written in their recent letter to Archimandrite Alexis (Pobjoy), amounts to a denial of the continued existence of the Church on earth - "in the strict sense". Of course, Cyprian would deny that he is saying that, and we are reliably informed that he even has a big photograph of Metropolitan Philaret and calls him a holy man. But it is impossible to read his "Informatory Epistle" in any other way.

So ROCOR's acceptance of Cyprian's ecclesiology in 1994 undoubtedly constituted a renunciation of the 1983 anathema, as Bishop Gregory Grabbe remarked at the time. This fact was veiled by the ROCOR Synod's reiteration of the anathema against ecumenism a few years later, in 1998. But it is impossible to reiterate an anathema while accepting that one does not have the right to anathematize, but only to "wall oneself off from", the heretics!

However, all veils and masks - and walls - are now cast aside. Archbishop Mark's urging his erstwhile brothers in Romania and Bulgaria to join the apostate World Orthodox is a renunciation not only of the 1983 anathema - that goes without saying - but also of Metropolitan Cyprian's ecclesiology which ROCOR accepted in 1994. Not only must ROCOR join the MP, according to him: *all* the other confessing Churches in Orthodoxy must join World Orthodoxy. So the "resistance movement" of True Orthodoxy was all a mistake - or rather, a church schism carrying with it all the consequences that apply to schismatics! And since the ROCOR Synod accepted Archbishop Mark's suggestion, and sent Fr. Alexander Lebedev to Romania to discuss matters with the Old Calendarists, we can only presume that other hierarchs agreed with Mark's reasoning.

Those ROCOR members contemplating following their leaders into the MP must consider carefully what this means. It means that, according to ROCOR, it is *wrong*, not only to anathematize ecumenism and the ecumenists, but also to "wall oneself off" from them. So when (and if) they come to anathematize ecumenism tomorrow during the Rite of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, they should remember that this anathema has now been renounced by their leaders, and that they will very soon be entering into full communion with all the "Orthodox" ecumenists - and thereby falling under the anathema that they themselves are pronouncing!

*February 11/24, 2007.*

(published in *Vernost'*, no. 79)

## 28. "DEMONIC GRACE" AND METROPOLITAN SERGIUS

"It is no secret that the Moscow Patriarchate was infiltrated by imposter clergy during various stages of its existence. Needless to say, they possessed demonic grace..."

This extraordinary oxymoron we find in an article by ROCOR Archpriest Nicholas Dalinkiewicz of Melbourne that was written in reply to Fr. Nikita Grigoriev's "Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, The Beacon of Light (Revised)".<sup>360</sup> Fr. Nikita's sharp, incisive exposure of the falsehood of the arguments in favour of the ROCOR-MP union has obviously rattled the uniates. Fr. Nicholas' long, wordy and rambling reply was equally obviously meant to counter the invigorating effect Fr. Nikita's article has had on the anti-union struggle. Not that he admits that this is his purpose: he claims to be neither pro- nor anti-union, but loftily neutral, "above the fray" and motivated by a purely rational and emotionless objectivity. But *qui s'excuse s'accuse* – Fr. Nicholas would have done better to remain out of the fray altogether rather than to betray such astonishing theological ignorance (not to use a more pejorative word).

Let us be clear: grace is Divine, grace is *God Himself*, according to the Holy Fathers. Therefore it cannot be demonic, or possessed by demons, or by the followers of the demons. An imposter cleric is clearly a follower of the demons, and so he cannot have grace. For "what concord hath Christ with Belial?" as the Apostle says (II Corinthians 6.15). There can be no concord, no union, because "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (I John 1.5).

A ROCOR Archbishop once said to the present writer: "[The MP's] Patriarch Pimen certainly has grace – it is another matter how he uses it." With these words he betrayed the fact that he did not understand what grace is. Grace cannot be *used*; it is not some kind of neutral substance, like electricity or plasticine, which can be used for good works or bad. Indeed, the very idea that God in His Divine and uncreated energies can be *used* in any way is blasphemous. God is the Almighty Sovereign: He is not *used* by anyone or anything, but is in complete control of everyone and everything. Grace works together with the good will of man to produce good works. It can never, ever be used by evil men for evil works.

Perhaps that error was just a slip of the tongue. But Fr. Nicholas' error is worse than the archbishop's and cannot be so easily excused. "Demonic grace"?! The idea is as contradictory as the idea of a holy devil or an evil God. Perhaps Fr. Nicholas is being ironic, perhaps he is indicating the impossibility of a KGB agent in a cassock being a true priest of God? Unfortunately not –

---

<sup>360</sup> [orthodox-synod@yahoogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-synod@yahoogroups.com), February 24, 2007.

there is no trace of irony in his words, and the whole thrust of his argument is that these KGB agents in cassocks are indeed true priests of God...

A further clarification is necessary here: when Fr. Nicholas speaks about “imposter clergy” here he is not talking about merely *sinful* clergy – that is, all clergy without exception, for there is no man, and no priest, without sin. Sin in a general sense drives away grace, but the grace of the priesthood remains in the sinful priest provided he remains in the true faith and the True Church, for the sake of that faith and that Church. As Fr. Nikita writes, “the fact that many of the MP hierarchy are apparently of questionable moral character is certainly not the actual reason why the Russian Church Abroad cannot unite with them.” It is not because they are *sinner*s that the True Church cannot unite with them but because they are *imposters* – that is, agents of Belial *posing* as servants of Christ. And for the servants of Christ there can be no union with *them*...

However, Fr. Nicholas implies that these imposters were the exception rather than the rule, and that the vast majority of bishops and priests in the MP were, and are, decent, right-believing people. In particular, he devotes a lot of space to justifying Metropolitan Sergius, even describing his notorious declaration as “of Divine inspiration”! Let us examine this claim in detail.

The question of Metropolitan Sergius and his declaration will not go away, hard as the MP tried to remove it from the agenda of negotiations. And rightly. For it is the crucial question, the question that caused the schism in the first place and the question that must be resolved in accordance with Divine Truth if the unia is not to go down in Church history as one of the greatest betrayals of all time.

First, it is necessary to establish that Metropolitan Sergius’ declaration was not a “one-off” slip, a moment of weakness that tarnished the career of an otherwise honourable hierarch. Metropolitan Sergius was notorious as an ambitious intellectual flirting with the revolutionary left long before the revolution of 1917. He betrayed the Church and undermined the authority of the Church hierarchy *at least three times* before the ultimate betrayal which was the declaration of 1927.

**1. Sergius Before the Revolution.** The first betrayal was in 1901, when the Holy Synod anathematised the novelist Lev Tolstoy in the following words: “In his writings Count Lev Tolstoy has blasphemed against the holy sacraments, denying their grace-filled character, has not venerated the Orthodox Church as his Church, has spoken evil of the clergy, has said that he considers that to venerate Christ and worship Him as God is blasphemy, while saying of himself, by contrast: ‘I am in God, and God in me’. It is not the Church that has rejected him, casting him off from herself, but he himself has rejected the Church: Lev himself has of his own will fallen away from the



Church and is no longer a son of the Church, but is hostile to her. All attempts of the clergy to admonish the prodigal have failed to produce the desired fruits: in his pride he has considered himself cleverer than all, less fallible than all and the judge of all, and the Church has made a declaration about the falling away of Count Lev Tolstoy from the Russian Orthodox Church".<sup>361</sup> Tolstoy was in essence a Protestant, who stood for a Christianity reduced to "pure" morality without the Church or the sacraments. He not only preached his own Gospel (according to his own translation published in Geneva), and created his own sect: he also subjected the teaching and the sacraments of the Orthodox Church to ridicule, as in his novel *Resurrection*.

Tolstoy was opposed among the clergy especially by St. John of Kronstadt, who wrote of him that he had "corrupted his moral personality to the point of deformity and mortification", and that he had "made himself into a complete savage with regards to the faith and the Church, because of his lack of education in the faith and piety since his youth." St. John appealed for help: "Holy warriors of the heavenly Church, take up arms, take up arms for the Church of God on earth. She, the beloved bride, is impoverished, she suffers from the savage attacks on her from the atheist Lev Tolstoy..."

However, Bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky), then a rising star of the Russian Church, took a different view. G.M. Soldatov writes: "Sergius compared Lev Tolstoy to Julian the Apostate, whom, as he said, no council had condemned and who had not been excommunicated, but who was an apostate from Christianity. For that reason, he said, 'it was not necessary to excommunicate Tolstoy, since he himself consciously left the Church'..."<sup>362</sup> If this reasoning were correct, it would not be necessary to anathematize any heretic, since it could be argued that he had already left the Church. Then it would also not be necessary to anathematize Arius or the Iconoclasts – or the Bolsheviks...

But Sergius' reasoning here is less important than the way in which he finds clever arguments to place himself in accord with the fashionable opinion of the time, the opinion of the liberals and the intellectuals. We find this ability to "jump on the bandwagon" again and again in his career, and it was undoubtedly because of this ability that Sergius was made chairman of the series of religio-philosophical meetings which began in 1901 and which enabled Church liberals and heretics to voice their opinions in public for the first time. "Sergius," writes Soldatov, "was popular in circles waiting for the introduction of 'democratic' reforms in the State. In his sermons and speeches he criticized the relationship between the ecclesiastical and state authorities in the Russian Empire."<sup>363</sup>

---

<sup>361</sup> Vladimir Gubanov (ed.), *Nikolai II-ij i Novie Mucheniki (Nicholas II and the New Martyrs)*, St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 701.

<sup>362</sup> Soldatov, "Tolstoj i Sergij: Iude Podobnie" (Tolstoy and Sergius: Images of Judas), *Nasha Strana (Our Country)*, N 2786; *Vernost' (Fidelity)*, N 32, January 1/14, 2006.

<sup>363</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*

Now it was not only liberals and future renovationists who were calling for reform in the relationship between Church and State. The conservative revolutionary-turned-monarchist L.A. Tikhomirov also published an article at this time arguing that the State should “give the Church independence and the possibility of being the kind of organization she must be in accordance with *her own* laws, while remaining in union with her”.<sup>364</sup> The problem was that both conservatives and liberals could argue for Church reform, but for completely different motives. Tikhomirov wrote as one who had seen the revolution from within, and turned away from it with all his heart, acknowledging the only true defence against it to be the strengthening of Church consciousness among the people.<sup>365</sup> The liberals, on the other hand, were motivated, not by a desire to see the Church free and therefore able to exert a more powerful influence on society, but rather the opposite: a desire to humble the State and destroy the Church’s influence once and for all. As for the liberal *bishops* such as Sergius, they leapt onto the bandwagon of the reform of Church-State relations, and of what later came to be called *renovationism*, in order to further their own careers.

Sergius was leftist in both the ecclesiastical and political senses. Thus he took a very active part in the work of the society for the rapprochement of the Orthodox and Anglican Churches. And his views on salvation caused controversy. One of his earliest critics was the future New Hieromartyr Archbishop Victor of Vyatka. He noted already in 1912 that the “new theology” of Bishop Sergius “would shake the Church”. Later, after Sergius issued his disastrous declaration of 1927, Archbishop Victor saw in it a direct result of Sergius’ pre-revolutionary teaching on salvation.<sup>366</sup>

Again, “when in 1905 the revolutionary professors began to demand reforms in the spiritual schools, then, in the words of Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), ‘his Grace Sergius... wavered in faith.’”<sup>367</sup> And when the revolutionary Peter Schmidt was shot in 1906, Archbishop Sergius, who was at that time rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, served a pannikhida at his grave. He also gave refuge in his hierarchical house in Vyborg to the revolutionaries Michael Novorussky and Nicholas Morozov (a participant in the attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II).

---

<sup>364</sup> Tikhomirov, “Gosudarstvennost’ i religia” (Statehood and religion), *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow Gazette), March, 1903, p. 3.

<sup>365</sup> His son became one of the hieroconfessors of the Soviet period, Bishop Tikhon of Kirillovsk.

<sup>366</sup> Hieromartyr Victor, “Novie Bogoslovy” (The New Theologians), *Tserkov’* (The Church), 1912; reprinted by *Orthodox Action*, Moscow, N 1 (11), 2000; Protopriest Michael Polsky, *Novie Mucheniki Rossijskie* (The New Martyrs of Russia), 1949-57, Jordanville, vol. 1, p. 601.

<sup>367</sup> “Preemstvennost’ Grekha” (The Heritage of Sin), publication of the parish of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, Tsaritsyn, p. 7.

Having such sympathies, it is not surprising that he was not liked by the Royal Family.<sup>368</sup>

Sergius was in favour of many of the innovations that were later to be introduced by the heretical “living church” renovationists. Thus among the suggestions made to the Pre-Conciliar Commission preparing for the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church that eventually took place in 1917-1918, we read of “a suggestion of the clergy of the cathedral of Vyborg on the longed-for reforms, presented by Archbishop Sergius of Finland to the Holy Synod on January 18, 1906:

- On the reform of the liturgical language: the future Council must debate the question of the simplification of the language of the Church, Slavonic, and the right accorded to the parish that wants it to serve the Divine offices in that language.
- It must think of abbreviating and simplifying the Typicon, and suppressing certain ritual actions, such as the breathing and spitting during the sacrament of baptism.
- It must think of abolishing the multiple repetitions of the same litanies during the same service, and replacing them by reading aloud the secret prayers during the Liturgy.
- It must think of giving priests [who have been widowed before the age of 45] the right to remarry.”<sup>369</sup>

**2. Sergius During the Revolution.** Already on March 7, 1917 Sergius, now Archbishop of Finland, supported the new Church Procurator, Prince Vladimir Lvov, in transferring the Synod’s official organ, *Tserkovno-Obshchestvennij Vestnik* (*Church and Society Messenger*), into the hands of the “All-Russian Union of Democratic Orthodox Clergy and Laity”, a left-wing grouping founded in Petrograd on the same day of March 7 and led by Titlinov, a professor at the Petrograd Academy of which Sergius was the rector.<sup>370</sup> Archbishop (later Patriarch) Tikhon protested against this transfer, and the small number of signatures for the transfer made it illegal. However, in his zeal to hand this important Church organ into the hands of the liberals, Lvov completely ignored the illegality of the act and handed the press over to Titlinov, who promptly began to use it to preach his Gospel of “Socialist

---

<sup>368</sup> In 1915 the Empress wrote to the Emperor that Sergius “must leave the Synod” (A. Paryayev, “Mitropolit Sergij Stragorodskij: Neizvestnaia Biographia” (Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky: The Unknown Biography), *Suzdal’skie Eparkhial’nie Vedomosti* (Suzdal Diocesan News), N 1, September, 1997, pp. 12-15.

<sup>369</sup> *Suggestions of the Diocesan Hierarchs on the Reform of the Church*, St. Petersburg, 1906, vol. 3, p. 443.

<sup>370</sup> As Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) testified, “already in 1917 he [Sergius] was dreaming of combining Orthodox Church life with the subjection of the Russian land to Soviet power...” (“Preemstvennost’ Grekha” (The Heritage of Sin), Tsaritsyn, p. 7).

Christianity", declaring that "Christianity is on the side of labour, not on the side of violence and exploitation".<sup>371</sup>

On April 14, a stormy meeting took place between Lvov and the Synod during which Lvov's actions were denounced as "uncanonical and illegal". At this session Archbishop Sergius apparently changed course and agreed with the other bishops in condemning the unlawful transfer. However, Lvov understood that this was only a tactical protest. So he did not include Sergius among the bishops whom he planned to purge from the Synod. He thought - rightly - that Sergius would continue to be his tool in the revolution that he was introducing in the Church.

The next day Lvov marched into the Synod at the head of a detachment of soldiers and read an order for the cessation of the winter session of the Synod and the retirement of *all* its members *with the single exception of Archbishop Sergius*.<sup>372</sup> Thus in little more than a month since the coup, the Church had been effectively placed in the hands of a lay dictator, who had single-handedly dismissed her most senior bishops in the name of the "freedom of the Church".

On April 29, the new Synod headed by Archbishop Sergius accepted an Address to the Church concerning the establishment of the principle of the election of the episcopate, and the preparation for a Council and the establishment of a Preconciliar Council. This Address triggered a revolution in the Church. The revolution consisted in the fact that all over the country the elective principle with the participation of laymen replaced the system of "episcopal autocracy" which had prevailed thereto. In almost all dioceses Diocesan Congresses elected special "diocesan councils" or committees composed of clergy and laity that restricted the power of the bishops. The application of the elective principle to almost all ecclesiastical posts, from parish offices to episcopal sees, resulted in the removal of several bishops from their sees and the election of new ones in their stead. Thus Archbishops Basil (Bogoyavlensky) of Chernigov, Tikhon (Nikanorov) of Kaluga and Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov were removed. Archbishop Joachim (Levitsky) of Nizhni-Novgorod was arrested and imprisoned for a time before being shot. The retirement of Archbishop Alexis (Dorodnitsyn) of Vladimir

---

<sup>371</sup> See Mikhail V. Shkarovskii, "The Russian Orthodox Church", in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914-1921*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997, p. 417; "K 80-letiu Izbrania Sv. Patriarkha Tikhona na Sviashchennom sobore Rossijskoj Tserkvi 1917-18gg." (Towards the Election of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon at the Sacred Council of the Russian Church, 1917-18), *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti* (Suzdal Diocesan News), N 2, November, 1997, p. 19.

<sup>372</sup> Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) wrote: "I can remember the opinions of those who knew him and who considered him to be a careerist and the complaints of hierarchs that he promised to retire with other members of the Synod in protest against Lvov, then he changed his mind and became head of the Synod" (Letter of April 23 / May 6, 1992 to Nicholas Churilov, *Church News*, April, 2003, p. 9).

was justified by his earlier closeness to Rasputin. The others were accused of being devoted to the Autocracy.<sup>373</sup>

Although the spirit of this revolution wave was undoubtedly anti-ecclesiastical, by the Providence of God it resulted in some beneficial changes for the Church. Thus the staunchly monarchist Archbishop Anthony, after being forced to retire, was later reinstated at the demand of the people. Again, Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin) of Lithuania was elected metropolitan of Moscow (the lawful occupant of that see, Metropolitan Macarius, was later reconciled with him), and Archbishop Benjamin (Kazansky) was made metropolitan of Petrograd. However, there were also harmful changes, such as the replacement of Archbishop Alexis of Vladimir by – Archbishop Sergius. The electors in Vladimir rejected beforehand all candidates who had displayed monarchist or “reactionary” tendencies before the revolution. The liberal Sergius was therefore a natural choice...<sup>374</sup>

**3. Sergius After the Revolution.** So far we have seen how Sergius harmed the Church without waging open war against it. However, on June 16, 1922 he was one of three important hierarchs who joined the schismatical “Living Church”, declaring: “We, Metropolitan Sergius [Stragorodsky] of Vladimir and Shuya, Archbishop Eudocimus of Nizhegorod and Arzamas and Archbishop Seraphim of Kostroma and Galich, having studied the platform of the Temporary Church Administration and the canonical lawfulness of its administration, consider it the only lawful, canonical, higher church authority, and all the instructions issuing from it we consider to be completely lawful and obligatory. We call on all true pastors and believing sons of the Church, both those entrusted to us and those belonging to other dioceses, to follow our example.”

Sergius was a full and conscious participant in the renovationist councils that praised Lenin and the revolution and “defrocked” Patriarch Tikhon. And his apostasy persuaded many others to apostasise. As the sergianist Metropolitan John (Snychev) admits: “We do not have the right to hide from history those sad and staggering apostasies from the unity of the Russian Church which took place on a mass scale after the publication in the journal ‘Living Church’ of the epistle-appeals of the three well-known hierarchs. Many of the hierarchs and clergy reasoned naively. Thus: ‘If the wise Sergius has recognized the possibility of submitting to the Higher Church Administration, then it is clear that we, too, must follow his example.’”<sup>375</sup>

---

<sup>373</sup> Monk Benjamin (Gomarete), *Letopis' tserkovnykh sobytij Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi nachinaia s 1917 goda* (Chronicle of Church Events, beginning from 1917), [www.zlatoust.ws/letopis.htm](http://www.zlatoust.ws/letopis.htm), p. 8.

<sup>374</sup> See Paryaev, *op. cit.*

<sup>375</sup> Snychev, “Mitropolit Sergij i Obnovlenneskij Raskol” (Metropolitan Sergius and the Renovationist Schism).

On July 15, 1923 Patriarch Tikhon anathematized the renovationists, after which the movement began to decline sharply. Metropolitan Sergius now hastened (and yet not very quickly, as Hieromartyr Bishop Damascene of Glukhov pointed out<sup>376</sup>) to make public confession to the Patriarch.

The Patriarch received Sergius in the following way. He explained that it was his Christian duty to forgive him, but that since his guilt was great before the people also, he had to repent before them, too. Then he would receive him with joy and love. And so he stood throughout the liturgy in simple monastic garments without his Episcopal mantia, klobuk, panagia, and cross. At the end of the liturgy he was led by the Patriarch out onto the amvon where he bowed to the people three times, after which the Patriarch restored to him his panagia with cross, white klobuk, mantia, and staff.<sup>377</sup>

Sergius appeared to have repented. But the renowned Elder Nectarius of Optina prophetically said that, even after his repentance, the poison of renovationism was in him still.<sup>378</sup>

After his fall from grace and public repentance in 1923, we would have expected Metropolitan Sergius to lie low, and attempt to hide the ambition that clearly propelled him. But no: only three years later, Sergius attempted to seize the position of first-hierarchy in the Church uncanonically. For in 1926, while he was deputizing for Metropolitan Peter, the patriarchal locum tenens, Metropolitan Agathangelus, another of the three locum tenentes appointed by Patriarch Tikhon, returned from exile and asked Sergius to hand over to him the reins of power. *Sergius refused*, although Agathangelus' claim was just. Eventually, seeing that Sergius was stubborn and that a schism threatened, Agathangelus yielded "for the sake of the peace of the Church".

The astonishing extent of Sergius' usurpation of power is revealed in his fifth letter to Agathangelus, dated June 13, in which he refused to submit even to Metropolitan Peter insofar as the latter, "having transferred to me, albeit temporarily, nevertheless in full, the rights and obligations of the locum tenens, and himself being deprived of the possibility of being reliably informed of the state of ecclesiastical affairs, can neither bear responsibility for the course of the latter, nor, a fortiori, meddle in their administration... I cannot look on the instructions of Metropolitan Peter that have come out of prison as other than instructions or, rather, *as the advice of a person without responsibility* [italics mine – V.M.]." A sergianist has commented on this letter: "It turns out that, once having appointed a deputy for himself, Metropolitan

---

<sup>376</sup> E.L. *Episkopy-Ispovedniki*, San Francisco, 1971, p. 68, note.

<sup>377</sup> Parayev, "Istinnoe Pravoslavie i Sergianstvo" (True Orthodoxy and Sergianism), *Suzdal'skie Eparkhialnie Vedomosti* (Suzdal Diocesan Gazette), September, 1997 <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=544>)

<sup>378</sup> I.M. Kontsevich, *Optina pustyn' i ee vremia* (Optina Desert and its Time), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery Press, 1971, p. 546.

Peter no longer had the right to substitute another for him, whatever he declared. This 'supple' logic, capable of overturning even common sense, witnessed to the fact that Metropolitan Sergius was not going to depart from power under any circumstances."<sup>379</sup>

*The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius.* In the context of Sergius' earlier career, his declaration of 1927 comes as no surprise. His surrender to the Bolsheviks in 1927 was entirely in character with his surrender to the liberals before 1917, to the Provisional Government in 1917, to the renovationists in 1922 and to his personal ambition in 1926. The fact is: Sergius had never confessed the truth in face of the *Zeitgeist*. Clearly, as even sergianist sources admit, he wanted power, and, having attained it, was prepared to make the sacrifices with his conscience required in order to retain it.

Fr. Nicholas will have none of this. He believes that the wording of the declaration has been misunderstood ("by virtually every person that has ever formed an opinion about the Declaration"!), that it was in fact the best he could have done in the circumstances ("the precise wording of his Declaration must have involved Divine inspiration"!), and that it doesn't matter anyway because "the end result would have been much the same whether the Declaration existed or not"! But the end result, it cannot be denied, was a Church schism of massive proportions, and the sending to prison and death of thousands of clergy and laity who refused to accept the declaration and who were labelled as "counter-revolutionaries" by Sergius for rejecting it. Surely, Sergius cannot be absolved of *all* responsibility for that?! And if he can, and Fr. Nicholas is right in his justification of the declaration, then are we not led to the inescapable conclusion that it was a grave sin to reject the declaration, and that both the Catacomb Church and the Russian Church Abroad became schismatics for rejecting it and the Church that issued it?!

One cannot have it both ways. Either the declaration was a betrayal of the truth, in which case the Catacomb Church and the Russian Church Abroad were right to reject it and break communion with the traitors who accepted it, and the MP *must* clearly and unambiguously repent of having accepted it (instead of calling it "clever", as Patriarch Alexis has done). Or, if it can in fact be justified on the grounds Fr. Nicholas has put forward, then the Catacomb Church and the Russian Church Abroad fell into schism, and all the ROCOR clergy, including Fr. Nicholas himself, must repent before KGB agent Drozdov of the mortal sin of schism. But Fr. Nicholas does want to have it both ways. He wants to justify Metropolitan Sergius, - in fact, whitewash him completely, - while saying that it was alright to break communion with him.

Fr. Nicholas tries to get round this dilemma by claiming that the schism was not a schism in the full sense, but only an "administrative division". Even if this view could be justified (which it cannot - but that will not be argued

---

<sup>379</sup> *Za Khrista Postradavshie* (Those Who Suffered for Christ), Moscow, 1997, p. 36.

here), it avoids the primary and critical issue: who was right? If, as Fr. Nicholas argues, Metropolitan Sergius was *right* to issue his declaration, then there is no escaping the conclusion that the Catacomb Church and the Russian Church Abroad were *wrong* to break with him, whether we call that break “administrative” or “spiritual”.

Fr. Nicholas goes on: “The fact that Metropolitan Sergius subsequently ‘told lies’ about the state of the Church, merely reflects his inability to cope with pressure applied to him, not only in terms of his personal safety, but the threat of execution of 117 bishops, the menace posed by the Revisionists [*sic* – renovationists is meant], and the welfare of the Church in general.”

It is necessary to expose this lie that supposedly Metropolitan Sergius had to sign the declaration because otherwise 117 bishops would have been executed. The present writer has found no evidence to support such a claim. Undoubtedly Sergius was threatened, but there is no reason to believe that the threat was any different to those made to other Church leaders who were in his position – Metropolitan Peter, for example. The difference is this: those hierarchs did not succumb to the threat, and therefore suffered martyrdom in their own bodies while not bringing this fate on anyone else, whereas Metropolitan Sergius died in his own bed while thousands of his clergy whom he had denounced as counter-revolutionaries went to the death camps.

This is particularly obvious in relation to Metropolitan Peter, who was, after all, the canonical head of the Church and the first target of the Bolsheviks’ threats. If Metropolitan Sergius had been threatened with the shooting of 117 bishops if he did not sign the declaration, then there is no doubt that Metropolitan Peter would have been threatened in the same way. But he did not sign the declaration, was sent to a slow and horrible death in Siberia – and 117 bishops were not shot. As he wrote on January 22, 1928: “For a first-hierarchy such an appeal [as Sergius’ declaration] is *inadmissible*... It was suggested to me... that I sign the appeal. I refused, for which I was exiled. I trusted Metropolitan Sergius, and I see that I was mistaken...”

What would have happened if Metropolitan Sergius had refused to sign the declaration? Exactly what happened to his predecessors in that position, Metropolitan Peter and Archbishop Seraphim – he would have been sent to prison while the Bolsheviks looked for another candidate for the role of the Russian Judas. After all, if the Bolsheviks had wanted to kill 117 bishops they could have done so without negotiating with anyone about it. But all the evidence is that after the Civil War period (1918-21), the Bolsheviks abandoned the method of direct physical annihilation in favour of the more subtle tactic of subversion of the Church from within. Lenin had rejected the murder of Patriarch Tikhon because, as he said, he did not want to make a martyr out of him like Patriarch Hermogen. Much more useful, much more of a real triumph for Bolshevism was the public recognition, *by the Church herself*,



of the legitimacy of the Bolshevik revolution. Metropolitan Peter, Metropolitan Agathangelus, Metropolitan Cyril, Metropolitan Joseph, Archbishop Seraphim and all the other martyrs and confessors of the Catacomb Church rejected this path. Metropolitan Sergius accepted it. That is the difference between a martyr and a traitor...

Fr. Nicholas quotes a letter from Metropolitan Sergius to Metropolitan Agathangelus in January, 1928 as if it proved his good intentions: he pleaded with him not to break with him and to have a little more patience "until it becomes clear where we are leading the ship of the Church: to a relatively bearable existence in the given conditions, or to a catastrophe. In another message, he promised that his uncanonical removals and appointments of bishops and other policies were a temporary expedient that would soon be abandoned once the church situation had been normalized."<sup>380</sup>

And yet Metropolitan Sergius never did abandon these uncanonical measures, although he lived for another fifteen years. Moreover, his policies quite clearly led to catastrophe rather than "a relatively bearable existence". As long as the Church, in the persons of her leading hierarchs, refused to compromise with Bolshevism, she suffered, but retained her strength. In the words of E. Lopeshanskaia: "The Church was becoming a state within the state... The prestige and authority of the imprisoned and persecuted clergy was immeasurably higher than that of the clergy under the tsars."<sup>381</sup> But soon after Metropolitan Sergius issued his declaration, the situation changed: a whirlwind descended upon the Church, such a persecution as She has never suffered in the two thousand years of her existence on earth.

What a paradox! That a policy designed to secure "a relatively bearable existence" for the Church in fact led to the greatest shedding of Christian blood in the whole history of the Church's existence! As St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco (whom Fr. Nicholas likes to quote selectively and out of context) wrote: "The Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius brought no benefit to the Church. The persecutions not only did not cease, but also sharply increased. To the number of other accusations brought by the Soviet regime against clergy and laymen, one more was added – non-recognition of the Declaration. At the same time, a wave of church closings rolled over all Russia... Concentration camps and places of forced labor held thousands of clergymen, a significant part of whom never saw freedom again, being executed there or dying from excessive labors and deprivations."<sup>382</sup>

---

<sup>380</sup> D. Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime, 1917-1982*, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984, vol. 1, pp. 186-187.

<sup>381</sup> E.L., *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>382</sup> St. John Maximovich, *The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. A Short History*, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997, pp. 28-29.

Even a recent biography of Sergius by an MP author accepts this fact: "If Metropolitan Sergius, in agreeing in his name to publish the Declaration of 1927 composed by the authorities, hoping to buy some relief for the Church and the clergy, then *his hopes not only were not fulfilled, but the persecutions after 1927 became still fiercer, reaching truly hurricane-force in 1937-38.*"<sup>383</sup>

Not only did Sergius not save anyone (except himself) through his declaration: we have evidence that he personally threatened confessing bishops with death if they did not sign it.

Thus the sergianist Metropolitan Manuel (Lemeshevsky) writes about the Catacomb Hierarchy, Bishop Seraphim of Dmitrov and Archbishop Zenobius of Tambov, that they refused to accede to Sergius' demand that they read out his declaration from the ambon to their flocks, which would have meant that they agreed with the declaration.

"I am morally incapable of doing that which those who do not love Christ the Saviour want," said Vladyka Seraphim.

"Agree with the proposal," said Metropolitan Sergius, "otherwise you will not only land up beyond the Arctic circle, but your lot will be three times as bad as that of Metropolitan Peter..."<sup>384</sup>

Another Catacomb confessor, Bishop Arcadius of Lubny, was once secretly in Moscow in the 1930s. Feeling weak and oppressed by constant loneliness, homelessness and fear of the next day, he was tempted to visit Metropolitan Sergius. In order to see the metropolitan, one had to go through great difficulties and dangers. And when he finally saw him and told him about his situation, the metropolitan, without listening to him, asked abruptly:

"Have you registered with the GPU? Until you are registered there, I will not speak with you."

As Vladyka Arcadius was leaving the metropolitan's office, he noted that both the metropolitan and all his clergy were well fed and wore clean clothing. And when he looked around at the miserable, destitute people who were waiting outside his office in the hope of seeing the metropolitan and receiving some help from him, he understood that his path was different, and that he had to return to his wandering...

Sergius' treachery was imitated by his followers. Thus once the Catacomb priest Fr. Sergius Mechev of Moscow, being without a bishop, followed the

---

<sup>383</sup> Sergius Fomin, *Strazh Doma Gospodnia* (Guardian of the House of the Lord), Moscow, 2003, p. 262.

<sup>384</sup> Metropolitan Manuel Lemeshevsky, *Die Russischen Orthodoxen Bischöfe von 1893-1965*, Erlangen, 1989.

advice of one of his spiritual sons and opened his heart to Bishop Manuel Lemeshevsky, and in confidence explained to him his church position, thinking that he shared his views. Bishop Manuel was soon arrested, and betrayed Fr. Sergius. During questioning at his trial, the arrested hierarch said that Fr. Sergius was the main instigator of the opposition to Metropolitan Sergius. He also said that he wished to be a loyal Soviet citizen and wanted no trouble. The prosecutor tapped him on the shoulder and said:

"Don't worry and be upset, Vladyka: you will be of some use to us later."

After this, he was released and was given the diocese of Orenburg by Metropolitan Sergius...<sup>385</sup>

In August, 1936 Sergius assumed for himself the title of Metropolitan of Krutitsa and Kolomna, although Metropolitan Peter was still alive, and also the title of patriarchal locum tenens, although only a lawfully convened Council of the Russian Church could give him that. There is no question about it: his motivation was ambition. And he was prepared to betray his fellow bishops in order to fulfil his ambitions...

Sergius' ferocity even against his own people continued right to the end of his life. Thus Sergius Shumilo writes that "in October, 1941, when the German armies had come right up to Moscow, Metropolitan Sergius issued an Epistle in which he discussed the Orthodox hierarchs and clergy who had made contact on the occupied territories with the local German administration. De facto all the hierarchs and clergy on the territories occupied by the Germans, including those who remained in the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, came under Metropolitan Sergius' excommunication..."<sup>386</sup>

Even patriarchal sources have spoken about the falsity of Sergius' declaration, the true confession of those who opposed him, and the invalidity of the measures he took to punish them. Thus: "Amidst the opponents of Metropolitan Sergius were a multitude of remarkable martyrs and confessors, bishops, monks, priests... The 'canonical' bans of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and his Synod were taken seriously by no one, neither at that time [the 1930s] nor later by dint of the uncanonicity of the situation of Metropolitan Sergius himself..."<sup>387</sup>

And again: "The particular tragedy of the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius consists in its principled rejection of the podvig of martyrdom and

---

<sup>385</sup> Alla D. "Svidetel'stvo" (Witness), in *Nadezhda* (Hope), vol. 16, Basel-Moscow, 1993, 228-230.

<sup>386</sup> Shumilo, "Sovetskij Rezhim i 'Sovetskaja Tserkov'" v 40-e-50-e gody XX stoletia" (The Soviet Regime and the 'Soviet Church' in the 40s and 50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=678>.

<sup>387</sup> M.E. Gubonin, *Akty Sviateishago Patriarkha Tikhona* (The Acts of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon), Moscow, 1994, pp. 809, 810.

confession, without which witnessing to the truth is inconceivable. In this way Metropolitan Sergius took as his foundation not hope on the Providence of God, but a purely human approach to the resolution of church problems... The courage of the 'catacombniks' and their firmness of faith cannot be doubted, and it is our duty to preserve the memory of those whose names we shall probably learn only in eternity..."<sup>388</sup>

### *The Consequences of Sergianism*

Sergius did not only destroy his own soul by his Judas sin: he created a tradition of spiritual treachery which the Moscow Patriarchate has followed to this day. This tradition has become so second nature to its leaders that they seem quite sincerely to be unaware of it, as if it were quite normal. Perhaps such seared consciences are to be expected in a church that has quite obviously been deprived of the grace of God now for generations. But the real tragedy is that ROCOR also has ceased to notice it. How many churches of ROCOR in Russia have been seized by the MP with the aid of OMON forces, even with the death of some clergy? And what about the seizure of the Hebron monastery in the Holy Land and the beating up of Abbess Juliana, accomplished with the aid of KGB-trained Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat? But Fr. Nicholas says nothing about such awkward details except to mouth the resounding lie that "the present regime in Russia offers greater religious freedom in Russia than is available in the West"!

But the most damning legacy of Sergius, and the one that ROCOR uniates try by all means to keep quiet about, is the undoubted fact that the bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate are KGB agents. Many people seem bored by this fact, as if it will just go away if we leave it alone. But we need constantly to remind ourselves of the single greatest obstacle to union with the MP – that it is an organization effectively created and run by the most antichristian force in recent history.

Writing in 1995, John Dunlop concluded that "the overwhelming majority of the current one hundred and nineteen bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate were ordained to the episcopacy prior to August of 1991. This suggests that each of these bishops was carefully screened and vetted by both the ideological apparatus of the Communist Party and by the KGB."<sup>389</sup> Keston College came to the same conclusion.<sup>390</sup>

---

<sup>388</sup> M.B. Danilushkin (ed.), *Istoria Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Orthodox Church), St. Petersburg: "Voskresenie", 1997, vol. I, pp. 297, 520.

<sup>389</sup> Dunlop, "The Moscow Patriarchate as an Empire-Saving Institution", in Michael Bourdeaux, M.E. Sharp (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, 1995, Armonk, NY, p. 29.

<sup>390</sup> Felix Corbey, "The Patriarch and the KGB", *Keston News Service*, September 21, 2000.

Former KGB Lieutenant-Colonel Constantine Preobrazhensky confirms this: “*Absolutely all* [my italics – V.M.] the bishops and the overwhelming majority of the priests worked with the KGB. After all, the Church was considered to be a hostile medium, and it had to be controlled through agents. Even the very mechanism of appointing bishops allowed only agents there.

“Bishops were put into the nomenklatura of the Central Committee of the CPSU, and so each one was confirmed by the Ideological department. And what department sent documents there for important personnel appointments? You’re right: the KGB. The certificate on the future bishop was prepared by the Fifth administration, which carried out a general watch over the Church, together with the spy service, if he had been even once abroad. Each of the certificates ended with the same phrase: ‘He has been cooperating since such-and-such a year’.

“This was precisely the most important thing for the Central Committee of the CPSU! This phrase witnessed to the fact that the future bishop was not only loyal to Soviet power, but was hanging from it by a hook: after all, there are unfailingly compromising materials on every agent! And this means that no dissident outbursts were to be expected from this bishop...”<sup>391</sup>

At the present time the KGB-FSB is more powerful than ever, and there is no reason to believe that its control of the Church is not as powerful as ever. So the “imposter clergy” are still there in greater numbers than ever. What consequences are we to draw from this undeniable fact?

We shall not draw the blasphemous conclusion made by Fr. Nicholas that the “grace” of these clergy is “demonic”. No, there is no such thing as “demonic grace”. There are demons, and there is grace. But they do not dwell together. The great lie of the Moscow Patriarchate, the great lie of Metropolitan Sergius, is that they can dwell together, that the grace of God can work through an organization created by demons and consciously pursuing demonic ends. Against this great and terrible lie we have to assert the Gospel truth that the Church is “the pillar and ground of *the truth*” (I Timothy 3.15), the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

As Catacomb Hieromartyr Damascene, Bishop of Glukhov, said: “What will those who have come to the Church say? What will they feel when, even from there, from the height of the last refuge of righteousness rejected by the world, from the height of the ambon, there sound words of hypocrisy, of man-pleasing and slander? Will it not seem that falsehood is achieving its final victory over the world, and that there, in the place where the image of Incarnate Truth flashed for them with the Unwaning Light, there now laughs in a disgusting grimace the mask of the father of lies?

---

<sup>391</sup> Preobrazhensky, *KGB v russkoj emigratsii* (The KGB in the Russian emigration), New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2006, p. 41.

"It is one or the other: either the Church is truly the immaculate and pure Bride of Christ, the Kingdom of truth, in which case the Truth is the air without which we cannot breathe, or, like the whole world which lies in evil, it lives in lies and by lies, in which case everything is a lie, every word is a lie, every prayer, every sacrament..."

*February 17 / March 2, 2007.  
Hieromartyr Hermogenes, Patriarch of Moscow.*

(published in *Vernost'*, no. 80)

## 29. JUDAS, PILATE AND ROCOR

Sergianism is the sin of Judas, the selling of the Body of Christ for the sake of security – the “security” provided by the Committee of State Security (the KGB). Ecumenism is the sin of Pilate, the turning away from the quest for truth in dogmatic questions for the sake, again, of security – the “security” provided by union with World Orthodoxy and World Religion in general. At one stroke on May 17 ROCOR will have committed both sins, and fallen into a double condemnation, when it enters into the “ecocommunist” organizations of the Moscow Patriarchate and the World Council of Churches.

The parallels between Sergianism and the sin of Judas, and between Ecumenism and the sin of Pilate, are closer than might be expected. Just as Judas sold Christ to the Jews, to Annas and Caiaphas, so Metropolitan Sergius sold his Church to the Jews – the atheist Bolsheviks who at that time controlled the Soviet Union. Decades later, as has been established by the MP priest Fr. Sergius Gordun, the Bolsheviks compelled the MP to enter the World Council of Churches because in this way they could obtain the seal of approval from the Gentile “Christian” world for their own apostasy. And so, before that impious tribunal, after washing their hands in a hypocritical confession of their innocence, the Soviet hierarchs proclaimed that there was no persecution of the faith in the Soviet Union, thereby condemning the true confessors to further torments while absolving the true thieves and murderers, the Barabbases of our age, of all blame. They then proceeded, as the holy Metropolitan Philaret of New York put it, to “put a sign of equality between truth and falsehood”, Orthodoxy and heresy, by signing up, over the course of the last 46 years, to a long series of anti-Orthodox resolutions of the WCC. In this criminal indifference to truth they were true Pilates, wearily shrugging their shoulders before Truth incarnate and saying: “What is truth?”

“But what has this to do with us?” say the ROCOR uniates. “We are free of the sins of our holy Father Sergius. We protested for a time, and now we have decided to stop protesting. After all, as our most holy Patriarch Alexis says, ‘the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius has gone into the past.’ Let bygones be bygones.” But did not the Jews of Christ’s time say: “His Blood be on us *and on our children*”? And does not the blood of the New Martyrs betrayed by Sergius fall on *every succeeding generation of Russian Christians* that does not decisively and publicly denounce his sin? After all, St. John Maximovich said that the guilt for forcing the tsar’s abdication falls on all Russian Christians to all succeeding generations who did not then, or do not now, condemn those who forced the withdrawal of “him who restrains”. Metropolitan Sergius’ sin of 1927 is a continuation of the sin of 1917. If the first removed the restraining power of the Orthodox State, the second removed the restraining power of the confessing Orthodox Church...

Shortly after the Bolsheviks came to power, they erected a statue to Judas Iscariot in Tula. Now the MP is erecting monuments to Metropolitan Sergius in his homeland, while in Ishim, home of ROCOR's Bishop Eutyches of Ishim, a monument has been erected to Stalin. More than that: a MP website is proclaiming to the whole world that the greatest feast of the Church year is not Pascha, but May 9, when Stalin's God-hating Red Army, after raping an estimated two million German women, gained the victory over Nazi Germany, thereby "trampling down death by death"! So Stalin, not Christ, is the saviour of the Moscow Patriarchate. No wonder that Metropolitan Sergius thought that he was "saving the Church" when he surrendered his Church into the hands of Stalin!

Judas at least had the strength to throw away his thirty pieces of silver. Will the ROCOR uniates have the strength to do the same when they at last face up to what they have done? Only God knows the answer to that question. What we can say, however, is that it is unlikely that considerations of pure truth alone will be enough to sway those who have already combined Pilate's indifference to the truth to Judas' betrayal of the truth. More likely to sober them up will be a material or psychological shock: the removal of their church by emissaries from Moscow, perhaps, or the replacement of a beloved pastor by a hireling or wolf from overseas.

Those who love ROCOR as she used to be must hope and pray that God will count them worthy of such a sobering-up. In the meantime, they cannot say that they have not been warned – and not only by us anti-uniates. They can do no better than listen to the words of the second hierarch of the Moscow Patriarchate, and probable future patriarch, Metropolitan Cyril (Gundyaev) in his August, 2006 letter to Putin. After calling Metropolitan Laurus a "heresiarch", and his clergy "false pastors", he writes: "No contacts whatsoever are permitted with the schismatic collaborationist Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which has not repented publicly before us for the great sin of blessing the stooge Fascists by her heresiarch and collaborator, Anastasy.

"We confirm the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate which excommunicated from our Church the false Metropolitan Anastasy and the schismatics of the ROCA during the years of the holy war [WWII] of the Soviet people under the leadership of our great Orthodox leader, Joseph Stalin, against the fascist enslavers. This verdict against the criminal was pronounced by the State Court.

No assembly whatsoever, much less one of the political character, or pannikhidas for the followers of Vlasov or the Cossacks, who entered into the service of Hitler, can be allowed. We bless all our faithful children to publicly expel the followers of the Karlovchanians from the parishes of the ROC/MP and of the ROCA. Our clergy and laity are permitted to overthrow the



monuments of the fascists stooges von Panwitz, Sultan-Girey, Krasnov, Shkuro, and Vlasov on the territory of the Patriarchate's metochion of All Saints at Sokol and of the parishes of the ROCA...

“May the Lord aid you in the God-pleasing labor of eradicating the impious Karlovchanians with their Vlasov-Fascist world-view, headed by their false Metropolitan Laurus...”

So from the mouth of the new Caiaphas himself in his letter to the new Herod we know exactly how he intends to deal with the new Judases of ROCOR! Nor will ROCOR be able to appeal for help from their new “brothers”, the Pilates of World Orthodoxy. They will be alone, utterly alone, to reap the bitter fruits of their new Babylonian captivity.

“I will not speak of the Mystery to Thine enemies, nor give Thee a kiss as did Judas...”

*April 8/21, 2007.*

### 30. OPEN LETTER TO PROTOPRESBYTER VALERY LUKIANOV

Dear Fr. Valery,

Forgive me, who know you only by reputation (they say you are a fine pastor with the most magnificent church in the Church Abroad), for writing to you “out of the blue” like this. I was sent a copy of your letter to Metropolitan Ilarion, and immediately felt that someone had to reply to it – and publicly. For it contains a misunderstanding which, if allowed to go uncorrected, could lead many onto the wrong path.

You write: “My heart is pained for the many clergy and believing children of the Church Abroad who today are not in communion of prayer with us, but who would have returned at that moment when the Moscow Patriarchate would have found it possible to leave the ecumenical World Council of Churches...”

Are you saying that the only obstacle to union with the MP is its membership of the WCC? I thought I must be mistaken, but looking through the rest of your letter I found no mention of sergianism, the root sin of the MP, the sin that *created* the MP. Moreover, you speak of ecumenism as “*the only* obstacle whose removal is vitally important and obligatory for the reunion of the broken families and divided parishes of the Church Abroad” (my italics).

Of course, the renunciation of ecumenism is indeed “vitally important and obligatory”. But to concentrate on ecumenism while not even mentioning the force behind it – sergianism – is to put the cart before the horse. Let me explain what I mean with an example from my personal experience.

Back in the 1970s, when I was still in the MP, my spiritual father was Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom). It was he who, together with Metropolitan Nicodemus, the KGB general (Agent “Sviatoslav”) of sorry memory, led the MP into the WCC at the General Assembly in New Delhi in 1961. At one point our English parish asked him to renounce his ecumenical activities. He said that he was not able to because he was “under orders” to continue them. Later I discovered who precisely was giving him the orders. Some Italian parishes in Sardinia came under his omophorion when he was exarch for Western Europe. However, these former papists in their zeal for Orthodoxy began to attack the Pope. Then Metropolitan Anthony (as he told me personally) received a phone call from Metropolitan Juvenaly of Tula (Agent “Adamant”). “Drop your Italian parishes”, said Juvenaly. “We are having negotiations with the Pope over the uniate question, and he has laid it down as a condition of the success of the negotiations that you drop these parishes.” So he dropped them... (They joined the Nestorians, but later came under Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili.)

Do you see that the ecumenism of the MP is a product of its enslavement to the God-fighting Soviet regime – in other words, of sergianism? In 1948 the MP condemned ecumenism: in 1958-61 it embraced it. This volte-face had nothing to do with the personal convictions of the hierarchs, and everything to do with their spineless subjection to the God-hating atheists. So it makes no sense to plead for the abandonment of ecumenism when its root and source, sergianism, is still flourishing. If you cut off the top of a weed but leave its root in the ground, it simply grows up again...

“But,” you may object, “sergianism is not relevant now that the USSR is no more, and the hierarchs are no longer in subjection to the KGB.” For reasons I will explain later, I do not believe for one moment that the KGB no longer controls the MP. But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that you are right. Then we must conclude that the MP hierarchs are ecumenists “not out of fear, but for conscience’s sake”. This only makes their sin deeper – and the chances of getting them to renounce it even smaller. Was Judas justified after he went back to the high priests and threw down the money in the temple? Not at all. He no longer feared the high priests, or wanted their money, and was heartily disgusted with himself, but *he did not repent* – and so was condemned. In the same way, the MP hierarchs *have not repented* of their cooperation with the atheists, and so are still condemned. They have not repented of Sergius’ declaration (they are preparing to glorify him), or of the thousands of True Orthodox clergy they sent to their deaths by labelling them “counter-revolutionaries”, or of calling the Tsar-Martyr “Bloody Nicholas” for generations, or of their cooperation in the destruction of thousands of churches and monasteries, or of their obscene praises of the biggest murderer in history, Joseph Stalin, or of their praises of the revolution and “Leninist norms”, or of helping to export that revolution to other countries, causing the murder, both spiritual and physical, of millions more people, or of destroying most of the Russian Church Abroad...

How can there be any union with the MP before they have repented of these evil deeds? And how can that union take place in any other way than by the MP repenting *before* the True Church and being received *by* the True Church?

If we follow the logic of your argument, then all the New Martyrs before about the year 1961, the entry of the MP into the WCC, were schismatics; for they rejected the MP, not because of ecumenism, which did not yet exist there at that time, but because of sergianism. The same applies to ROCOR, which broke communion with Sergius in 1927 precisely because of sergianism. We reject the MP because of sergianism in the first place, because it made itself into a tool of the God-fighting communists: ecumenism came later as a consequence, as the icing on the poisonous cake of apostasy...

But let us now turn to the argument that the issue of sergianism is now irrelevant, because the Soviet Union passed away in 1991... This must be a first in Church history: that a group of heretical churchmen are deemed to have stopped practising their heresy, not because of any change of heart or behaviour on their part, but because of a change of political regime! Since when can *any* political change be considered equivalent to the abandonment by heretics of their heresy?!

In fact, of course, from a *spiritual, ecclesiastical* point of view there has been no change for the better in the MP, but rather a distinct change for the worse. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s the MP has waged a relentless war against ROCOR, the Catacomb Church and in general against any Orthodox group that refuses to submit to it. Vile, lying propaganda, the seizing of churches and monasteries, the physical intimidation (and more) of clergy and believers, has continued unabated. And worst of all, the justification of sergianism goes on. Thus consider the following evidence of sergianism in *just one year*:-

1. In May, 2004, at a liturgy in Butovo in the presence of Metropolitan Laurus, Patriarch Alexis said: "We pay a tribute of respect and thankful remembrance to his Holiness Patriarch Sergius for the fact that he, in the most terrible and difficult of conditions of the Church's existence in the 1930s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led the ship of the Church and preserved the Russian Church amidst the stormy waves of the sea of life."<sup>392</sup>
2. On November 1, 2004 Patriarch Alexis, according to "Edinoe otechestvo" "emphasised that it is wrong to judge Metropolitan Sergius and his actions".<sup>393</sup> For, as he said on November 9, 2001: "This was a clever step by which Metropolitan Sergius tried to save the church and clergy."<sup>394</sup> A *clever* step?!
3. On January 24, 2005 Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev) of Smolensk, head of the MP's Department of Foreign Relations, confirmed that the MP does not condemn sergianism: "We recognize that the model of Church-State relations [in the Soviet period] did not correspond to tradition. But we are not condemning those who realized this model, because there was no other way of preserving the Church. The Church behaved in the only way she could at that time. There was another path into the catacombs, but there could be no catacombs in the Soviet space..."<sup>395</sup> No catacombs, but there was the Catacomb Church. However, the sergianists have no time for the Catacomb Church...

---

<sup>392</sup> Ridiger, in A. Soldatov, "Sergij premudrij nam put' ozaril", *Vertograd-Inform*, N 461, 21 May, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>393</sup> "Chto 'soglasovano' sovместnaia komissia MP i RPTs (L)" (What the Joint Commission of the MP and the ROCOR (L) Agreed Upon), <http://www.russia-talk.com/otklike/ot-402.htm>, 3 November, 2004.

<sup>394</sup> <http://www.ripnet.org/besieged/rparocora.htm?>

<sup>395</sup> Gundiaev, in *Vertograd-Inform*, № 504, February 2, 2005.

4. In February, 2005, there was a "Worldwide Russian People's Council" in Moscow, to which several guests from ROCOR (L) were invited. As Laurence A. Uzzell, president of International Religious Freedom Watch wrote for *The Moscow Times*: "The speeches at that gathering, devoted to celebrating the Soviet victory in World War II and linking it to the Kremlin's current policies, suggest that the domestic church [the MP] is counting on Russian nationalism to woo the émigrés. Especially striking is the distinctively Soviet flavor of that nationalism. The main speeches failed to mention the victory's dark sides, for example the imposition of totalitarian atheism on traditionally Christian societies such as Romania and Bulgaria. Patriarch Alexey II made the incredible statement that the victory 'brought the Orthodox peoples of Europe closer and raised the authority of the Russian Church'. If one had no information, one would think that the establishment of Communist Party governments in the newly conquered countries were purely voluntary – and that what followed was unfettered religious freedom... Sergianism is clearly still thriving, despite the Moscow Patriarchate's occasional abstract statements asserting its right to criticize the state. The Patriarchate's leaders still openly celebrate Patriarch Sergei's memory, with some even favoring his canonization as a saint. With rare exceptions, they still issue commentaries on President Vladimir Putin's policies, which read like government press releases. They seem sure that this issue will not be a deal-breaker in their quest for reunion with the émigrés. Putin's Kremlin will be hoping that they are right."<sup>396</sup> Unfortunately, they were right: sergianism was no longer a "deal-breaker" for ROCOR.
  
5. In May, 2005 Patriarch Alexis wrote a congratulatory epistle to the president of Vietnam on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the communist victory in the Vietnam War. He called it a "glorious anniversary" and said that it opened up new horizons for the Vietnamese people.<sup>397</sup>

Nothing much has changed, has it? And how could it, when, as is affirmed by many sources, the KGB-FSB is now more powerful than ever, occupying 40% of all government posts, and the whole of the hierarchy of the MP? Some say this is "old news" and ignore it. But how can we ignore the fact that the MP is led by unrepentant members of the organization that has done more to destroy the Orthodox Church than any other organization in history (with the possible exception of the Jewish rabbinate), and of which its former head, Vladimir Putin once said: "There is no such thing as an ex-chekist"? How can

---

<sup>396</sup> Uzzell, "Reaching for Religious Reunion", *Moscow Times*, March 31, 2005, p. 8; *Tserkovnie Novosti* (Church News), May, 2005.

<sup>397</sup> [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/features/2007/01/04/feature-02](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2007/01/04/feature-02).

we ignore the fact, moreover, that, as former KGB Lieutenant-Colonel Constantine Preobrazhensky writes, “*absolutely all* [my italics] the bishops and the overwhelming majority of the priests worked with the KGB.”<sup>398</sup>

Let us suppose, Fr. Valery, that by a miracle the MP renounces the WCC. Presumably you will then change the semi-communion you now have with the MP (that is, everything except commemoration of the Patriarch) for full-blooded membership. And then what will happen?

First, a number of those who are with you now will leave you and join the True Orthodox Church. This will undoubtedly sadden you; for as you movingly write: “If the good pastor leaves his whole flock for the salvation of one lost sheep, one cannot imagine that the leadership of the Church could simply leave a multitude of its children who have departed for ideological reasons to the whim of destiny.” And yet it is not those who *leave* you then whom you will have to answer for, for they will have saved themselves. It is those who *follow* you that you will have to answer for at the Last Judgement. For they will have followed you into the abyss of the Church’s condemnation – that condemnation which falls on sergianism and all the sergianists.

But that will be only the beginning. Your magnificent church will then become – not immediately, of course, but eventually – one of the KGB-FSB’s listening posts in the United States. For that is what every major MP church abroad has become. Thus for example the MP cathedral in London which I used to visit became – as the former MI5 officer Michael Wright revealed (in a book banned in Britain but published in Australia) – the main “dropping off” point for KGB agents in London. And it will happen to your church – unless you resist, in which case you will be removed.

You are now on the very brink of spiritual death, for you and for your flock, Fr. Valery. Step back while you still have time! The temporary fig-leaf which the MP gave you in the form of non-commemoration of the Patriarch is now being removed, and is being replaced by the garments of skin given to those who have been expelled from the Paradise of the Church. Flee, casting your garment behind you, as did Joseph the Fair! Otherwise you will become like the fig-tree without fruit that was cursed by the Lord, or the salt that has lost its savour – good for nothing, except to be cast out and trampled on by men...

Yours in Christ,  
Vladimir Moss.  
May 26 / June 8, 2008.  
Sunday of the Holy Fathers.

---

<sup>398</sup> Preobrazhensky, *KGB v russkoj emigratsii* (The KGB in the Russian emigration), New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2006, p. 41.

### 31. THE PELAGIAN ROOTS OF SERGIANISM

The Russian Church schism of 1927 associated with the name of Metropolitan, later Patriarch Sergius (Stragorodsky) of Moscow was the greatest ecclesiastical tragedy of the twentieth century, and probably the greatest disaster to befall the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church since the fall of the Roman papacy in the eleventh century. Moreover, all the Local Orthodox Churches have remained in communion with the schism to this day, becoming complicit in its crimes and falling under the same condemnation. It is therefore a matter of the greatest importance that the real nature of the schism, and its roots in the personal, social and theological consciousness of its leading protagonist should be thoroughly understood.

At its simplest, the tragedy may be described as the fall of Metropolitan Sergius from the confession of Christ under the pressure of the God-hating atheists and "for fear of the Jews". Just as the lapsed in the early Christian centuries fell away by sacrificing to idols, or buying certificates to the effect that they had sacrificed, so Metropolitan Sergius, in his notorious "Declaration" of 1927, fell away from the faith by sacrificing on the altar of the atheist revolution, calling its joys the Church's joys and its sorrows – the Church's sorrows. However, if the matter were limited to the fall of Metropolitan Sergius alone, it would be a tragedy, but only a personal one. What made the tragedy so massive was the fact that the majority of the Church's clergy felt compelled to follow Sergius in his apostasy, agreeing with his justification of his act on "canonical" grounds, and condemning those who refused to follow him as "schismatics". At this point their apostasy became, in the words of Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko), "*dogmatized apostasy*": the sergianists not only sinned, they made "excuse for excuses in sin", providing what was in essence a *heretical* underpinning to their apostasy.

The first bishop formally to break communion with Metropolitan Sergius was Archbishop, later Hieromartyr Victor (Ostrovidov) of Vyatka. Not only was he the first to break with him: he was also the first to see the full horrific depth of Sergius' fall, calling it "worse than heresy". Moreover, he provided the first clue as to *why* Metropolitan Sergius, in spite of his reputation as a brilliant theologian, should have fallen away so disastrously. The clue he found in certain theological errors in Sergius' master's thesis, entitled "The Orthodox Teaching on Salvation".<sup>399</sup> As he wrote to his friend, Bishop Abraham of Urzhuma: "His errors with regard to the Church and the salvation of man in her were clear to me already in 1911, and I wrote about him [under the pseudonym 'Wanderer'] in an Old Ritualist journal [*The Church*], that there would come a time when he would shake the Church..."

---

<sup>399</sup> The second edition was published by Kazan Imperial University in 1898. All quotations from this work here are from this edition, which is to be found at <http://www.pravbeseda.ru/library/index.php?page=book&id=91> (in Russian).

A little later, in January, 1928 Bishop Victor clarified his remark in the first two replies to fifteen questions put to him by the Vyatka OGPU:

“How would you interpret, from the civil and ecclesiastical points of view, the appearance of the new church tendency – the platform of the Declaration of July 29, 1927?”

*From the ecclesiastical point of view: as an incorrect teaching on the Church and on the matter of our salvation in Jesus Christ – an error of principle by Metropolitan Sergius...*

“How do you look at the ‘Declaration’? etc.”

*The ‘Declaration’ is a separation from the truth of salvation. It looks on salvation as on a natural moral perfection of man; it is a pagan philosophical doctrine of salvation, and for its realization an external organization is absolutely essential. In my opinion, this is the same error of which, as early as 1911, I accused Metropolitan Sergius, warning that by this error they would shake the Orthodox Church. I said this in the article, ‘The New Theologians’, signing it with the pseudonym ‘Wanderer’. They knew who printed this, and for a long time I experienced their ill disposition towards me. By dint of this error of theirs, they cannot think of the Church without an external organization.*

Now the phrase “it looks on salvation as on a natural moral perfection of man” sounds as if Hieromartyr Victor is accusing Sergius of something similar to the heresy of *Pelagianism*; for the essence of that ancient heresy consists in ascribing the primary cause of our salvation to our own natural will, and not to the Grace of God. However, neither in the Declaration of 1927, nor in his master’s thesis of 1895, does Sergius deny the necessity of the Grace of God for man’s salvation. Nor does he deny original sin, the other hallmark of the Pelagian heresy. Nor is it immediately obvious that Pelagianism, even if it could be ascribed to Sergius, leads necessarily to the conclusion that for salvation “an external organization [for the Church] is absolutely essential”. I believe, however, that a closer examination both of Sergius’ 1895 thesis, and of the comments of his examiners on the thesis (Archimandrite Anthony (Khrapovitsky) and Professor V.A. Sokolov), and of Hieromartyr Victor’s 1911 article criticising it, will show that Sergius did indeed espouse what might be called a twentieth-century variant of Pelagianism, and that this insight helps us to understand his heretical ecclesiological views and thereby bring us closer to the heart of his and the Russian Church’s tragedy...

\*

Archimandrite Sergius’ thesis is subtitled: “An Attempt to Uncover the Moral-Subjective Aspect of Salvation on the Basis of the Holy Scriptures and the Works of the Holy Fathers”.



Already in this subtitle is revealed a potential pitfall in Sergius' approach: an incorrect understanding of the relationship between the "objective" and "subjective" aspects of salvation. The "objective" aspect is the redemptive Sacrifice accomplished by Christ on the Cross for the sins of all mankind. The "subjective" aspect is the appropriation of the fruits of that salvation by each individual Christian through faith and works. Sergius' aim was to explicate the Orthodox doctrine of faith and works, and thereby reveal the inadequacy of the Catholic and Protestant approaches to the subject, which both suffered from what Sergius called the Roman "juridical" theory of redemption. There is no doubt that Sergius succeeded in accomplishing this aim in chapters one to three and the first half of chapter four of his thesis (entitled "the Juridical World-View before the Judgement of Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition", "Eternal Life", "Reward" and "Salvation"). He fluently and elegantly built up a powerful case for the Orthodox understanding of faith and works on the basis of abundant quotations from Holy Scripture and Tradition. However, by concentrating entirely on the subjective aspect, and not explaining, even briefly, its relationship to the objective aspect, Sergius ran the risk of overemphasizing the former at the expense of the latter and thereby distorting the Orthodox teaching on salvation as a whole.

That Sergius did indeed fall into this trap was pointed out – politely and gently, but tellingly – by Professor Sokolov:

"As his subtitle shows, the author placed as the task of his work the question of salvation, that is, the so-called subjective aspect of redemption. He was propelled to this formulation by the fact that it is precisely this aspect of the Orthodox dogma that, in spite of its great importance, is usually least expounded in theological systems and investigations. The author has carried out his task with sufficient breadth and solidity, successfully filling up in this way a gap that has sometimes made itself felt in Orthodox theological science. But we think that, thanks to his intense struggle against the so-called juridical theory and a certain obsession with the direction he has adopted, the author's work is *one-sided* [my italics – V.M.] and for that reason produces a somewhat idiosyncratic impression on the reader. The author touches so lightly on the objective aspect of redemption that the reader completely forgets about it and is sometimes inclined to think that there is, as it would seem, no place for it in the author's line of thought. In Orthodox theological courses we accept the expression that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Redeemer, that He brought Himself as a sacrifice for the sin of all men and thereby won for them clemency and forgiveness, satisfying the offended Righteousness of God. The Lord accomplished our salvation... as the High Priest, offering Himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world and thereby satisfying for us the Righteousness of God (Sylvester, IV, 159, 164; Macarius, III, 152, 192, etc.). Moreover, in the investigation under review this aspect of the matter is not only not uncovered, but we sometimes encounter such expressions as can give reason for perplexity to readers who are not firm in dogmatics. The

author says, for example: 'The righteousness of God does not consist in the demand for satisfaction for sins, but in presenting to each person that lot which naturally follows from the direction in life that he has accepted' (p. 92). Of course, similar expressions in the author's flow of thought can have a completely Orthodox meaning; but since he does not adequately penetrate their true significance, thanks to his one-sided development [of the subject], he can give cause for perplexity. – In order to avoid this, it seems to us that the author should, before realizing the main task of his work, have stopped to briefly describe the objective aspect of the dogma of redemption, and only then, having explained the significance of the private question of the personal salvation of each person in the general system of the dogma, pass on to what now constitutes the exclusive content of this investigation..."<sup>400</sup>

We do not know Sergius' reaction to this criticism, but he would no doubt have pointed with disapproval to the "juridical" expressions used by Professor Sokolov, and pointed out that the whole purpose of his thesis was to reveal the inadequacy of the juridical theory. Nevertheless, leaving aside the question of the suitability of these expressions, Sokolov's main point stands: that to ignore completely the "objective" aspect of salvation – the Cross of Christ, no less – in a long thesis on the Orthodox teaching on salvation is, to put it mildly, "one-sided". We shall see that Hieromartyr Victor considered this fault to be much worse than "one-sidedness"; but before examining his criticism, let us look more closely at what Sergius himself says.

In chapter 4 of his thesis, Sergius discusses the sacrament of baptism, and the necessity for the will of man to work together with the Grace of God in order that the sacrament should be truly effective for salvation. His teaching here is Orthodox; but it is also at this point that he begins to touch on other aspects that elicit, as Sokolov would say, "perplexity". Thus he writes: "It is equally incorrect to represent salvation as something imputed to man from outside, and as a supernatural transformation taking place in man without the participation of his freedom. In both the one and the other case man would turn out to be only a will-less object of somebody else's activity, and the holiness received by him in this way would be no different from innate holiness that has not moral worth, and consequently, is by no means that lofty good which man seeks... Salvation cannot be some external-juridical or physical event, but is necessarily a moral action, and as such, it necessarily presupposes, as a most inescapable condition and law, that man himself carries out this action, albeit with the help of Grace. Although Grace acts, although it accomplishes everything, still this is unfailingly within freedom and consciousness. This is the basic Orthodox principle, and one must not forget it if one is to understand the teaching of the Orthodox Church about the very means of man's salvation." (chapter 4, pp. 9-10)

---

<sup>400</sup> Sokolov, in Appendix to *Bogoslovskij Vestnik*, July, 1895, <http://www.pravbeseda.ru/library/index.php?page=book&id=99>, pp. 4-5 (in Russian).

It is true, of course, that the salvation of the individual is impossible without the active participation of the individual himself. But it is also true that the “objective” side of man’s salvation was accomplished “from the outside”, as it were – that is, without the active participation of any other man than the Son of Man, Christ God. When Christ died on the Cross, and the rocks were rent asunder, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and the graves were opened, and the dead that were in them arose, and the gates of hades were destroyed, and the prisoners were freed, and the gates of Paradise were opened, all this was the work of one man only, *the Saviour*. Nor was this a half-accomplished salvation: Christ’s last words, “It is finished”, were a precise witness to the fact: the work of our salvation was now accomplished, the Sacrifice was now *completed*. It remained for this salvation, and the fruits of this Sacrifice, to be assimilated by individual men through the Descent of the Holy Spirit and the repentance and good works of the men who received Him. But objectively speaking *salvation was accomplished; Christ had saved us*. This central fact receives no acknowledgement in Sergius’ thesis – with consequences that will be discussed later...

He goes on: “The juridical point of view presents two absurdities in the teaching on how man is saved. First, it teaches that God does not impute sin to man and proclaims him righteous at the same time that man remains the same sinner in his soul. And secondly, salvation itself – more exactly, the sanctification of man – is presented in the form of a supernatural recreation that takes place independently of the will, an almost material transformation through Grace of what is being accomplished in the soul. Orthodox dogmatics can use the same expression, but their content, of course, will be very different.” (p. 10)

Here we see the first signs of a Pelagian tendency in Sergius’ thought – not necessarily an acceptance of the British heretic’s precise formulations, but an imitation of his general tendency to overestimate the contribution of human freewill to our salvation at the expense of God’s work.

First, it is not the “juridical theory” that proclaims the baptized man righteous: it is *the Holy Church*. Thus immediately after baptism the priest says: “The servant of God, N., is clothed with the robe of righteousness”. And immediately after chrismation he says: “Thou art *justified*. Thou art illumined... Thou art sanctified.” This justification, illumination and sanctification are objective *facts* accomplished entirely by the Grace of God by virtue of the Sacrifice of God on the Cross. Even if the baptized person receives this Grace with an impure heart or insincere disposition, it is a fact that his *past* sins are remitted, even if the sins he is *now* committing are *not* remitted, as St. Gregory the Theologian says.<sup>401</sup> And even if in the future he buries this talent in the ground, this talent has undeniably been received...

---

<sup>401</sup> St. Gregory, *Word 40*; quoted by Sergius in his thesis, chapter 4, p. 19.

Secondly, this is indeed “a supernatural recreation that takes place independently of the will” – and there is nothing “material” about it. Or does Sergius seriously think that the will of the man being baptized accomplishes his own salvation?! But the Prophet David says: “A brother cannot redeem; shall a man redeem? He shall not give to God a ransom for himself, nor the price of the redemption of his own soul, though he hath laboured for ever, and shall live to the end” (Psalms 48.7-8). It is Christ Who offered the ransom for man, and the Holy Spirit Who descended into the font to sanctify the water. In neither of these acts does the individual to be baptized play any part. His part lies in his *preparation* for the gift in the period before baptism, and in his *cultivation* of the gift after baptism. Sergius is right to emphasize the importance of this prior preparation and consequent cultivation of the gift of God’s Grace, without which the gift is ultimately lost, and salvation with it. *But the gift itself is God’s alone.* More precisely, it is *God alone*, since the Grace of God, as St. Gregory Palamas teaches, is God Himself.

Sergius continues: “After our explanation of the Orthodox understanding of the righteousness of God, of the reward, of the essence of salvation, we must not suppose that at the moment of baptism or repentance some kind of non-imputation of sin is accomplished, some kind of proclamation or ‘pronunciation’, as the Protestants say, of man as righteous. According to the Protestant teaching it turns out that God was always angered against man, and could never forgive that offence that man inflicted on Him through sin. Then, suddenly, seeing the faith of man in Jesus Christ, God is reconciled with man and does not consider him to be His enemy any longer, although man can sin after this, but now with impunity. Here is clearly revealed the basic principle by which the juridical world-view lives: everything is constructed on offended self-love – once self-love has been pacified, sin, which before had been condemned and cursed, loses its sinfulness. The Orthodox Church does not teach this.” (p. 10)

Of course, the Orthodox Church does not teach this parody. When the holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church speak about the wrath of God, or of offences to His Majesty, or of the satisfaction of His offended Righteousness, they use images taken from the ordinary life of sinful men – *but purge them of all sinful connotations.* The fact that some Catholic and Protestant writers appear not to have purged their minds of these sinful connotations is not a fault of the “juridical theory” itself, but of those who interpret it too literally – and these over-literal interpreters appear to include Sergius. Of course, it was not offended self-love, but a supremely dispassionate love of man, that led the Holy Trinity to plan the Sacrifice of the Son of God on the Cross. The Sacrifice was necessary because only in this way could sin be paid for and justice done – but justice understood, not in a sinful, human way, but as the restoration of the Divine order of things. So the Sacrifice demonstrated *perfect love in pursuit of perfect justice*; and it is this “satisfaction” of justice in love that saved us.

“Can we imagine,” continues Sergius, “that God was at enmity with man for his sin, and that God could not be reconciled with man even if he thirsted for God with all his soul and prayed for communion with Him? Remaining faithful to the Word of God and the teaching of the Fathers, we can only say: no. To be convinced of this, let us open the Bible and there, on the very first pages, we shall find a refutation of this Protestant view, although the Protestants praise themselves that they believe only what the Bible teaches.” (p. 10)

But what does the Bible in fact teach? It teaches that before the Death and Resurrection of Christ, *every single man who lived and died on this earth went to hell*. And not only the great sinners, not only those who were drowned in the flood of Noah, or who were burned in Sodom and Gomorrah, but even the most righteous of the patriarchs and prophets. Thus the Patriarch Jacob, on hearing of the supposed death of his son Joseph, cried: “I will go down mourning to my son *in hell* [hades]” (Genesis 37.34). Even the great Moses was not allowed by God to enter the Promised Land, both literally and figuratively; and when he appeared with the Lord at the Transfiguration, he came, as the Holy Fathers explain, *from hell*. These great men most certainly thirsted for God with all their soul – “as the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God”, says David (Psalms 41.1) – but they did not receive what they desired. Indeed, as St. Paul says, all these great ones of the Old Testament, in spite of “having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Hebrews 11.40), the New Testament Christians. Why? Because in the Old Testament, justice had not yet been done, the great Sacrifice for sin had not yet been offered and accepted. So faith was not enough, the desire for God was not enough, a whole life spent in labours and struggles was not enough. For even the most holy man “shall not give to God a ransom for himself, nor the price of the redemption of his own soul, though he hath laboured for ever, and shall live to the end” (Psalms 48.7-8). That ransom, that price for the redemption of the souls of all men, was given only by Christ on the Cross.

So Sergius’ error here was not a small one. It involved, in effect, a denial of the necessity of the Cross for our salvation. He could not imagine that God could not be reconciled to man “even if he thirsted for God with all his soul and prayed for communion with Him”. But if simply thirsting for God with all one’s soul were sufficient for reconciliation with God, why did the Old Testament righteous go to hell? And why did Christ have to suffer?

\*

For a deeper understanding of Sergius' error let us now turn to Hieromartyr Victor's article, which he entitled "The New Theologians", referring first of all to Archbishop (as he then was) Sergius.

"According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, the holy sacrament of Baptism is the spiritual, Grace-filled birth of man from God Himself. In it man acquired the saving power of Christ's death on the cross, that is, all the sins of man are taken upon Himself by the Saviour of the world, and for that reason man is completely cleansed from all his sins and, by virtue of this, immediately becomes a member of His Kingdom and a co-heir of His eternal glory. And this action of the holy sacrament takes place not in imagination and thought only, but essentially, that is, there takes place in very deed the renewal of man by Divine power, which directly gives to man: "the remission of punishment, the loosing of bonds, union with God, the freedom of boldness and, instead of servile humiliation, equality of honour with the angels" (St. Gregory of Nyssa). 'The Lord voluntarily died in order to destroy sins... Sin was nailed to the cross, sins were destroyed by the cross,' teaches St. John Chrysostom. And for that reason 'the Saviour is the cleansing sacrifice for the whole universe, for He cleanses and abolishes all the sins of men by His voluntary death on the cross'. And every believer is made a participant of this cleansing sacrifice, and together with it – a co-heir of heavenly good things – only in the holy sacrament of Baptism. 'In the sacrament of Baptism,' writes Chrysostom, 'God cleanses our very sins, for Grace touches the soul itself and rips out sins from the root. For that reason the soul of the person who has been baptized is cleaner than the rays of the sun... The Holy Spirit, remoulding the soul in Baptism, as if in a crucible, and destroying sins, makes it purer and more brilliant than any gold'.

"This Orthodox teaching on the holy sacrament of Baptism is also contained in the works of many of the bishops of the Russian Church. Thus Bishop Theophan the Recluse says: 'Having died on the cross, the Lord and Saviour raised our sins upon the cross and became the cleansing of our sins. In the death of the Lord on the cross is a power cleansing sin. He who is baptized, immersed into the death of Christ is immersed into the power that cleanses sin. This power in the very act of immersion consumes every sin, so that not even a trace of it remains. What happens here is the same as if someone were to prepare a chemical solution which, when things were immersed into it, would consume every impurity. In the same way the death of Christ, as a power cleansing sin, consumes every sin immediately anyone is immersed into this death by baptism. Not a trace of sin remains in the person who has been baptized: he dies to it...' In this way, that is, by means of the holy sacrament of Baptism, 'everything that is necessary for the salvation of man passed from Christ the Lord to the believer who is being baptized and he acquires this, not nominally (that is, in words), but essentially'.

“That is what the Universal Church taught and teaches to the present day on the holy sacrament of baptism, but the new theologians do not want to agree with this teaching, and Archbishop Sergius tries to affirm that Bishop Theophan supposedly did not want to say what he said: ‘Here in the words of Bishop Theophan another would see the most extreme, because of its materialism, idea of the justification of man... However, all these comparisons remain only comparisons, without expressing the very essence of the matter... they do not touch the real meaning of the sacrament, for the expression of which it is necessary to abandon the scholastic formulas... For Orthodoxy there is no need to resort to a transformation of the sinner into a righteous man *that is so contrary to all the laws of the soul’s life.*’

“‘After all,’ theologises Archbishop Sergius, ‘the soul is not some kind of substance such that in it one could transform a man against his will, and man cannot be a passive object for the action of supernatural (Divine) power..., while baptism itself is not some external magical action on the person being baptized’,... it is ‘a great trial of the conscience of a man, a crucial moment in his life. After all, if the holy sacrament of baptism, in itself and through its own essence, through the faith in the Crucified One of the person being baptized or of his sponsors, could give complete renewal of life, man would turn out to be without will, the object of another’s influence, and the holiness received by him in this way would differ in no way from innate holiness having no moral worth’. ‘Man cannot undergo salvation in spite of his will, and for that reason it is impossible to imagine *that at the moment of baptism or repentance there should be accomplished a certain removal of responsibility for sin, a declaration that man is righteous*’ or holy, or, which comes to the same thing, worthy of the Heavenly Kingdom. ‘The essence of justification consists not in a change in his spiritual-bodily nature which is independent of his will, but in a change in the direction of his will..., while the Grace of baptism only strengthens the determination of man to such a degree that he begins to hate sin’. And so ‘*justification for the Orthodox is a free, moral condition; it depends on man himself, although it can be accomplished only with the help of the Grace of God*’... And ‘the forgiveness of sins does not consist in the fact that existing sin is covered or forgiven; there is no such forgiveness,’ teaches Archbishop Sergius, ‘in Christianity.’ ‘*The forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of baptism or repentance consists in the fact that, as a consequence of a radical change in the soul, which is as much of Grace as of free will, there appears in man an attitude to life that is completely contrary to his former, sinful one, so that former sin ceases to influence the life of man’s soul and ceases to belong to the soul, but is annihilated.*’ ‘The thread of man’s life is as it were broken, and the sinful past that was formed in him loses its defining, compulsive power... This voluntary cutting off of evil is the most essential part of justification, it is, so to speak, the very means whereby sins are forgiven to man... Man has abandoned his former sins and for that reason they are not accounted to him’, but ‘what is done remains done, it is impossible for man to forget his past sins..., the consciousness of his past sins only teaches man to understand the mercy and all-forgiving love of God’.

“Yes, the presence in a man of his former sins, as exactly defined acts of his will, are not important after his baptism or repentance, for, ‘you know, a new man emerges from the font, not by dint of the annihilation of his sins, but insofar as he determines himself towards the good...; by this self-determination towards the good or inner, freely willed revolution, man’s sinful covering is sloughed off..., whether this is original sin or the consequences of the acts of the person himself who is being baptized.’ ‘So as to come out of the sacrament a new man, he must himself strive to be new, and, insofar as he has the power, he must destroy in himself the slightest remains of his former sinful make-up..., so that the righteousness in the proper sense that man receives in baptism is rather a possibility than a reality.’ But if that is the case, ‘then even the non-reception of the sacrament in the prescribed form may not harm man, since the essence of true Christianity has been formed in him – the desire for the Kingdom of Christ.’ Hence it becomes clear that ‘if justification is not a magical, but a moral matter, if its essence consists in the change in the man’s attitude to life, a change which is only brought to completion by Grace, but is produced by the will of man’, then for the cleansing of the sins of him who is being baptized, the cleansing sacrifice of Golgotha is, of course, not required at all. For justification, according to the teaching of the new theologians, everything depends not on assimilating the fruits of the expiatory death of the God-Man, but on a moral, psychological revolution. ‘Sin is not forgotten and is not remitted to a man because of some reasons that are extraneous for the soul of the man’, and for that reason ‘if it is possible to speak of God’s remitting sin to a man, this is only as an intention from before the creation of the world of the whole economy of God concerning our salvation, an intention which brought the Son of God down to earth and raised Him onto the cross, and which, on the other hand, is an eternal earnest of mercy for us, for every sinner who comes to God.’ Every other concept of the sanctification of man and the forgiveness of sins is, in the opinion of Archbishop Sergius, a crude error of the West, and arises not because man in fact had no means of salvation, but because ‘such an error was dear to the self-loving nature of man’.

“This briefly is the teaching of the new theologians, and in particular Archbishop Sergius, on the holy sacrament of baptism, from which we can gain a clear idea of their general view of God’s work of the salvation of man, which salvation in the proper sense of the word *does not and did not exist*, while man was only given help to accomplish his own salvation. The new theologians cannot be reconciled with the teaching of the Orthodox Church on the real significance of Christ’s death on the cross as a sacrifice cleansing sins, for such an understanding of salvation, in their opinion, by ignoring man’s own means [of salvation], is deprived of common sense, since it denies the laws of the psychological life of man, in which everything must take place in the natural order. ‘Salvation is not some kind of external-juridical or magical action, but a gradually accomplished development in man through



the action of the Grace of God, since there can be degrees of redemption,' says Archbishop Sergius.

"Not having in themselves enough strength to receive the mystery of Christ's coming into the world *as a precisely defined historical act of God's salvation of man*, as a certain moment whose value lies in itself as such, the new theologians try to conceptualize Christianity in another way, that is, by adapting different dogmas of the Christian teaching to the spiritual life of man. Instead of firmly and boldly judging the whole present life by the truth of the teaching on God's perfect salvation of the world, they conceptualize this truth in terms of its possible suitability and usefulness for the life of man. They hope somehow to link the Nicene Creed and the Sermon on the Mount, that is, the truth of the dogmatic teaching of Christianity with the voluntary life of man. And they forget that the moral content of life is for every believer only the inevitable, natural consequence of God's determined work of the salvation of man. And thinking by means of an artificial broadening of the moral autonomy of man to enliven Christianity, the new theologians in reality only repeat in themselves the sorrowful destiny of the well-known heretics of the 16<sup>th</sup> century – the Socinians. 'The Socinian theologians also ascribed the accomplishment of salvation to the moral forces of man himself, albeit with the cooperating Grace of God, so that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, according to their theological ideas, was not an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men, but only an exceptional witness of God's readiness to forgive people all their sins and give them Grace-filled help to attain eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven. With this idea of Christ's work they evidently not only destroyed the Christian dogma of salvation, but also opened a broad path to a decisive rejection of the whole of Christian dogmatics; because if in actual fact God's participation in the salvation of men is limited only to the simple demonstration of God's readiness to cooperate with their real salvation, then for this demonstration the coming into the world of the Son of God was by no means required... And the Socinian theologians truly arrived at the complete destruction of Christianity, although in actual fact they did not think or want to destroy Christianity, but on the contrary to affirm it as the absolutely true religion.'

"Such an end is inevitable also for the new theologians: for them, too, the work of Christ the Saviour in that form in which it was accomplished must without question lose, and has already lost for many unfortunates, its meaning and significance. And man again returns to the path of natural thinking and the still no more than 'possibility' of his salvation, and in the torments of despair he will again cry out to Heaven in the words of the Apostle Paul: 'Wretch that am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?'"<sup>402</sup>

---

<sup>402</sup> Hieromartyr Victor, "The New Theologians", *The Church*, 1912; reprinted in the series "On the New Heresies", Moscow: Orthodox Action, N 1 (11), 2000 (in Russian). Cf. also the analysis by Fr. George Florovsky in *The Ways of Russian Theology* (Paris, 1937, 1991, in

Let us now turn from Sergius' theoretical theologising to his practical incarnation of his theology in life. And here we find a paradox. He who, in his theoretical works, emphasized that salvation lies in the exercise of will, in ascetic struggle against sin, rather than in "magical" sacramental transformations, demonstrated in his life an almost slavish subjection to the elements of the world, especially the political and social world in which he lived. And yet this paradox is easily explained. The true ascetic is not he who believes in the power of his own will, but who relies on God's power alone, saying with Paul, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2.20). For as the Lord said: "My Grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12.9).

---

Russian): "Much closer to Anthony [Khrapovitsky] is Sergius Stragorodsky, the present Metropolitan of Moscow (born 1867). In his book, *The Orthodox Teaching on Salvation* (1895) he stops on the 'moral-objective' aspect of the dogma. The Orthodox teaching is revealed in opposition to the western. It is an opposition between the moral and the juridical viewpoints. Sergius tries to exclude any kind of heteronomism from teaching and salvation. One should not ask for what man receives salvation. One should ask: 'How does man work with salvation'. Sergius very convincingly shows the identity of blessedness and virtue, salvation and perfection, so that here there can be no external reward. Eternal life is the same as the good, and it not only is awaiting us as something on the other side, but it is also acquired already now. Sergius faithfully portrays the process of moral conversion, from sin to God. But the objective side of the process remains too much in the shade. Even Anthony in his time pointed out that Sergius spoke very carelessly about the sacraments, especially about baptism ('or repentance' – already this one word 'or' is characteristic). The impression is given that what is decisive in the sacrament is the moral revolution, the decision 'to stop sinning'. Through repentance man is renewed, 'the thread of life is as it were broken'. The co-working of Grace only strengthens the will, 'the work of freedom'. Therefore the very accomplishment of the sacrament is not so absolutely necessary, 'since this essence of the true Christian – the desire for the Kingdom of God – has already been formed in a man'. Martyrdom, even without blood, is in accordance with its inner meaning identical to baptism – 'both the one and the other proceed from an unshakeable decision to serve Christ and renounce one's sinful desires'. And still more sharply: 'the essence of the sacrament consists in the strengthening of the zeal of a man for the good. We are saved by mercy – through faith. By faith we come to know mercy, we recognize the love of God, that is, that our sin is forgiven and there is now no obstacle on our way to God. We recognize in God the Father, and not the Awesome Master'... Sergius set himself the task of theologizing from experience, from the experience of the spiritual life. And this is what makes the book significant... However, it is quite wrong to reduce the whole content of patristic theology to asceticism – and asceticism, moreover, interpreted psychologically. No less characteristic for the Fathers is their metaphysical realism. Which makes it all the less possible to justify moralism and psychologism from patristics. Hardly acceptable also is the exaggerated voluntarism in asceticism itself. After all, contemplation remains the limit of ascent. And in any case, one cannot substitute asceticism in the place of dogmatics, or dissolve dogmatics in asceticism. This temptation is always an indicator of theological decline. There were elements of decline also in the Russian school of 'moral monism'. There was no contemplative inspiration in it, and too much psychological self-analysis. This was undoubtedly a reflection of western theological moods, and of an excessive attention to the problem of justification. It was necessary to return to the Fathers more fully and with greater humility..." (p. 439)

And so Sergius again and again showed an alarming “flexibility”, or ability to compromise with the prevailing ethos of democratism and socialism. Thus when Lev Tolstoy was excommunicated by the Church in 1901, Sergius joined those who defended the inveterate heretic. Again, when the revolutionary Peter Schmidt was shot in 1906, Archbishop Sergius, who was at that time rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, served a pannikhida at his grave. He also gave refuge in his hierarchical house in Vyborg to the revolutionaries Michael Novorussky and Nicholas Morozov. Having such sympathies, it is not surprising that he was not liked by the Royal Family: in 1915 the Empress wrote to the Emperor that Sergius “must leave the Synod”.

Not surprisingly, Archbishop Sergius was among those who welcomed the February revolution in 1917. He was one of only two members of the Synod who approved the over-procurator Lvov’s transfer of the Synod’s official organ, the *Tserkovno-Obshchestvennij Vestnik* into the hands of his friend, the liberal Professor Titlinov. Lvov rewarded Sergius for this act by not including him among the bishops whom he purged from the Synod in April. He thought that Sergius would continue to be his tool in the revolution that he was introducing in the Church. And he was right in so thinking.

For the new Synod headed by Archbishop Sergius accepted an Address to the Church concerning the establishment of the principle of the election of the episcopate. This Address triggered a revolution in the Church. The revolution consisted in the fact that all over the country the elective principle with the participation of laymen replaced the system of “episcopal autocracy” which had prevailed thereto. In almost all dioceses Diocesan Congresses elected special “diocesan councils” or committees composed of clergy and laity that restricted the power of the bishops. The application of the elective principle to almost all ecclesiastical posts, from parish offices to episcopal sees, resulted in the removal of several bishops from their sees and the election of new ones in their stead (Sergius himself was elected Metropolitan of Vladimir).

Worse was to follow. When the pro-Soviet renovationist movement seized power in the Church in 1922 when Patriarch Tikhon was under house arrest, Sergius immediately joined it. Moreover, he called on “all true pastors and believing sons of the Church, both those entrusted to us and those belonging to other dioceses, to follow our example.” Sergius later repented of his membership of the renovationists (although, as Hieromartyr Damascene of Glukhov pointed out, he took his time over it). However, the people did not trust him, shouting to the Patriarch not to receive him; while the renowned Elder Nectarius of Optina said that the poison of renovationism was in him still. It was only the generosity of the Patriarch that gave him another chance. That generosity was to prove fateful for the Russian Church. For in 1927 Sergius effected the third, most successful revolution in the Church since 1917, a revolution whose leaders are still in power to this day...

The essence of Sergius' Declaration of 1927 consisted in his exhortation to the people to be reconciled with communism, to work together with the revolution rather than against it. Soviet power, he said, was there to stay and therefore could not be opposed. "Only ivory-tower dreamers can think that such an enormous society as our Orthodox Church, with the whole of its organisation, can have a peaceful existence in the State while hiding itself from the authorities. Now, when our Patriarchate... has decisively and without turning back stepped on the path of loyalty [to Soviet power], the people who think like this have to either break themselves and, leaving their political sympathies at home, offer to the Church only their faith and work with us only in the name of faith, or (if they cannot immediately break themselves) at least not hinder us, and temporarily leave the scene. We are sure that they will again, and very soon, return to work with us, being convinced that only the relationship to the authorities has changed, while faith and Orthodox Christian life remain unshaken..."

Here we see a doctrine of faith and works fully consistent with the heretical one he developed in his master's thesis. Here is the same lack of emphasis on the Grace of God, the same reliance on human will and human reason. Here also is the same emphasis on asceticism; but the ascetic task of "breaking oneself", according to Sergius, consists not in the struggle against evil, but in non-resistance to it (Tolstoyism). For we must be sensible; we cannot overthrow kingdoms, we must keep in step with the times – although St. Athanasius the Great said that Christians keep in step, not with the times, but with God! "Faith and work" consists in working with the enemies of the faith, and in exhorting those who do not share this faith to "leave the scene" – in reality, as life would soon demonstrate, "leaving" meant torment and death in the concentration camps. "The relationship to the authorities has changed", he admits, "while faith and Orthodox Christian life remain unshaken". But how can faith and life remain unshaken when there has been a fundamental change in relationship to such an important phenomenon as the revolution, which persecutes faith and destroys life?

Hieromartyr Victor especially noted the phrase: "Only ivory-tower dreamers can think that a society as tremendous as our Orthodox Church, with its whole organization, can exist throughout the country hidden from the authorities of the State." He saw in this an over-valuation of the outer, human aspect of the Church, its *organization*, and an under-valuation of its inner, Divine aspect, its Grace-filled life as a mystical *organism*.<sup>403</sup> The external organization of the Church is something that human will and resourcefulness can do something to save – and Sergius, with his practical, Pelagian bent was determined to do what he could to save it. The problem was that if this meant compromise with evil, then the inner, Divine essence of the Church, her Grace-filled life, would be lost. But Sergius cared less about that...

---

<sup>403</sup> This distinction between the Church as organization and the Church as organism was developed also by Hieromartyr Mark (Novoselov) in his *Letters to Friends*, Moscow, 1994.

On December 29, 1927 St. Victor wrote to Sergius: "The enemy has lured and deceived you for a second time with the idea of an organization of the Church [the first time was his fall into the renovationist schism in 1922]. But if this organization is bought at the price of the Church of Christ Herself no longer remaining the house of Grace-giving salvation for men, and he who received the organization ceases to be what he was - for it is written, 'Let his habitation be made desolate, and his bishopric let another take' (Acts 1.20) - then it were better for us never to have any kind of organization.

"What is the benefit if we, having become by God's Grace temples of the Holy Spirit, become ourselves suddenly worthless, while at the same time receiving an organization for ourselves? No. Let the whole visible material world perish; let there be more important in our eyes the certain perdition of the soul to which he who presents such external pretexts for sin will be subjected."

And he concluded that Sergius' pact with the atheists was "not less than any heresy or schism, but is rather incomparably greater, for it plunges a man immediately into the abyss of destruction, according to the unlying word: 'Whosoever shall deny Me before men...' (Matthew 10.33)."

For "in truth," as he wrote a few weeks later to Bishop Abraham, "these people [the communists] who think evil against the Church are not from men, but from him who was a murderer from the beginning and who thirsts for our eternal destruction, whose servants these new traitors [like Sergius] have become, subverting the very essence of the Orthodox Church of Christ. They have made it, not heavenly, but earthly, and have changed it from a Grace-filled union into a political organization.

"With childlike simplicity we believe that the strength of the Church is not in organization, but in the Grace of God, which cannot exist where there is betrayal and renunciation of the Orthodox Church, even if it is under the guise of the attainment of the external good of the Church. After all, here we have not simply the [personal] sin of M. Sergius and his advisors. Oh if it were only that! No! Here we have the systematic destruction of the Orthodox Russian Church according to a definitely thought-through plan, the striving spiritually to mix up, defile and degrade everything. Here is laid the destruction of the whole of the Orthodox Church."

\*

The most famous demonstration of Sergius' Pelagian understanding of salvation is to be found in the interview he gave to the future leader of the Catacomb Church, Hieromartyr Archbishop Demetrius of Gdov and several representatives of the Petrograd clergy in Moscow on December 12, 1927.

There are two accounts of the critical part of the interview. According to the first, from the materials of Hieromartyr Demetrius' investigation in 1929-30, the conversation went like this:

"We haven't come to quarrel with you, but to declare to you from the many who have sent us that we cannot, our religious conscience does not allow us to recognize, the course that you have embarked on. Stop, for the sake of Christ, stop!"

"This position of yours is called confessing. You have a halo..."

"But what must a Christian be?"

"There are confessors and martyrs. But there are also diplomats and guides. But every sacrifice is accepted! Remember Cyprian of Carthage."

"Are you saving the Church?"

"Yes, I am saving the Church."

"The Church does not need salvation, but you yourself are being saved through her."

"Well, of course, from the religious point of view it is senseless to say: 'I am saving the Church'. But I'm talking about the external position of the Church."<sup>404</sup>

According to the second account, Sergius said: "By my new church policy I am saving the Church." To which Archpriest Victorinus Dobronravov replied: "The Church does not have need of salvation; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. You, yourself, Vladyka, have need of salvation through the Church."<sup>405</sup>

Both accounts are instructive. In the first we see that Sergius mocked the confessional stance of the True Orthodox representatives ("you have a halo..."). He himself refused to take up his cross, and mocked those who took up theirs. There are two ways, according to him: that of the confessor and that of the diplomat. But his path of "diplomacy" involved not only non-resistance to the evil of communism, but also open lying (for example, about the non-existence of persecutions against the Church) and betrayal of those who took the path of confession (by calling them "counter-revolutionaries").

---

<sup>404</sup> L.E. Sikorskaya, *Svyaschennomuchenik Dmitrij Arkhiepiskop Gdovskij*, Moscow, 2008, p. 88 (in Russian).

<sup>405</sup> I.M. Andreyev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 1982, p. 100.

The justification for this is that he is thereby “saving the Church”. Sergius qualifies this somewhat by saying: “I’m talking about the external position of the Church”. But this reveals still more clearly the falseness of his position. For if he can be saving the external position of the Church, this can only be – in the conditions of Soviet power – at the expense of her inner faithfulness to Christ. In conditions of the merciless persecution of the Church, the external and human can be saved (*if* it can be saved, which depends, not only on the will of man, but also on the will of God) only at the expense of the inner and Divine, whereas the path of Christian asceticism is always the exact opposite: the sacrifice of external comfort and peace for the sake of “the one thing necessary”, “the pearl without price”, communion with Christ...

However, it is the words of Hieromartyr Victorin that pinpoint with the greatest exactness the essence of Sergius’ fall, and the fall of the sergianist church in general. Sergius sought to save the external organization of the Church (and thereby his position at the head of it). But the Church does not need saving: the salvation of the Church was guaranteed once and for all when Christ shed His Blood for it on the Cross. This is the objective aspect of our “collective” salvation which Sergius sought to ignore, just as he ignored the objective aspect of our personal salvation in his master’s thesis. So whatever the gates of hell may hurl at the Church, the Church will remain. The only question is: who will remain in her? And the answer is: only he who believes in the Church, in her Grace-filled capacity to ride every storm and defeat every enemy, and who believes that he can be saved only by remaining loyal to her in whatever position – glorious or humble, at peace or at war – that she may find herself.

Sergius did not believe in the Church, in the complete sufficiency of her Grace-filled life with or without the external organization and material support that times of peace give her. He believed in the relative value of her external organization, and he believed in his own ability to salvage something of value from the wreckage of that organization – a faith that was shown to be woefully misplaced in the unprecedented destruction of the sergianist church that took place in the 1930s. He was like Uzzah who “put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (II Samuel 6.6-7). Like Uzzah, Sergius forgot that God does not need the feeble hand of man to keep the ark of the Church from falling from the shaking of oxen-like men. What He does need – or rather, what *we* need if we are to remain in the ark, and partake of her holiness and salvation – is the bold and uncompromising confession of faith in Him and His Holy Church. Pelagian that he was, Sergius believed more in the sufficiency of his own powers than in the power of God. And so he saved neither the Church nor his own soul. For he died, not in the Ark, in the One, Holy, Orthodox-Catholic and Apostolic Church, but beside it, in a man-made church devoid of the Grace of God.

For “outside the Orthodox Church,” said Hieromartyr Victor, “there is no Grace of God, and consequently, no salvation either. Nor can there be any true temple of God, but it is simply a house, according to the word of St. Basil the Great. In my opinion, without the Grace of God, a temple becomes a place of idolatry...”

*February 24 / March 9, 2010.  
First and Second Finding of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist.  
Tuesday of the Week of the Holy Cross.*



## 32. PATRIARCH CYRIL, ABORTION, GAYS AND THE GODDESS APHRODITE

We have heard a great deal recently about the immorality of the West from Patriarch Cyril of Moscow. As we must admit with sorrow, there is much truth in this critique. Unfortunately, however, the patriarch says much less about the sins of his own flock, which must surely be his first concern... The immoralities of "the Russian world" cry out to heaven for vengeance. And vengeance will certainly come especially upon those who hypocritically condemn others for the sins that they themselves commit.

The patriarch especially likes to focus on the sexual immorality of the West, while making constant "excuses for excuses for sin" as regards the sins of the Soviet people. In a recent speech to the Russian Duma, he pointed to the good points of the Soviet years, especially its "solidarity". Solidarity with whom? we may ask. With Christ? Surely not in the world's first atheist state. With the millions of those killed and tortured in the camps in the 1920s and 30s or condemned to a miserable catacomb existence for their faith? No way...

Some years ago, on coming to power, the patriarch had the extraordinary audacity to say that the Red Army in 1945 had "conquered death by death", redeeming the sins of the 1930s by their heroic exploit of saving the world from fascism. May 9, VE-Day for the Soviets, was "another Pascha". And yet what happened at this "Pascha"? The Nazis were defeated, yes - with a cruelty and sexual voracity the like of which has not been seen since the time of Genghis Khan. 1.4 million German women in Eastern Prussia were raped, and most of the female population of Berlin were raped multiple times, often while their husbands were forced to watch. Is this conquering death by death? Or is it *multiplying* death by death - both spiritual and physical?

Still worse, a vast area from Berlin to Peking (if we fast-forward to 1949) came under the yoke of the collective Antichrist of communism, the greatest enemy of Christ and Christianity in the history of the world, while all the Orthodox Churches of Eastern Europe (with the exception of Greece, which was saved by the Anglo-Americans) came under the dominion of the atheists and entered the service of the world revolution. Was this "another Pascha"? What was there to rejoice about here?

But let us return to the speech in the Duma. We may note that this took place on January 9/22, the feast of St. Philip, metropolitan of Moscow, who was killed by Ivan the Terrible for rebuking him for his mindless killings. Did Patriarch Cyril call to mind St. Philip, or in any way imitate him by rebuking the mindless killings that Putin and his bandits have been inflicting on members of St. Cyril's own flock in Ukraine and elsewhere? No, no - the patriarch preaches "solidarity" with bandits, not mercy towards the helpless,

cringing servility before the powerful of this world, not confession of the truth. After all, if he said something he might lose his \$4 billion dollar fortune!

Then the patriarch made an interesting proposal: to increase the rate that doctors charge for abortions. This would have the pleasing consequences of squeezing the rich (not the really rich, like himself, but the middle classes) and reducing the rate of abortions, thereby slowing down the catastrophic fall in Russia's population. How moral! How financially prudent! How farsightedly caring about the demography of the Russian nation!

Not a word, however, about the fact that abortion – any abortion, carried out for any price – is murder, and condemns the abortionist to eternity in hell-fire! Not a word about the fact that Russia is number one in the world for numbers of abortions per head of population. And not a word about the fact that (as the present writer has seen with his own eyes) placards outside churches proclaim it is possible to *buy* absolution from the sin of abortion from Moscow Patriarchal priests for a tidy sum of money; so that the jingle about the medieval papacy now applies equally to the Moscow Patriarchate:

*As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,  
The soul from purgatory springs...*

And not a word, either, about the fact that Patriarch Cyril himself is involved in the abortion business, a fact that was first reported almost three years ago. Since the patriarch has decided to become ever so moral about abortion, it might be worth reminding ourselves of the main facts by quoting from this article: "One can have an abortion and restore one's virginity in the medical centre 'Alternative', which operates on the territory of the 'Danilovskaia' hotel attached to the Danilov monastery of the ROC MP in the centre of Moscow, reports a correspondent of 'Portal-Credo.Ru'. Very close to the hotel can be found the official residence of Patriarch Cyril (Gundiaev) and the Department of Foreign Ecclesiastical Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

"'If it turns out that the birth of a child forms no part of your plans, then it is necessary to reduce the consequences of termination of pregnancy to a minimum,' it says on the page of the medical centre on the territory of the hospital "Danilovskaia", which is dedicated to abortions and emergency terminations. Surgical and non-surgical methods of termination are offered, and abortion, it points out, 'is always a hormonal stress for the organism'.

"The re-establishment of virginity is offered on the centre's site as one of the services of aesthetic and intimate surgery. The site points out that the 'foremother' of this operation can be considered to be the goddess of love and

beauty Aphrodite, who regularly dived into a special pool, 'from which she emerged on the bank as a chaste virgin again'..."<sup>406</sup>

One of the puzzling features of Patriarch Cyril's moral onslaught on the West is that, while attacking especially the Anglo-Saxon world and all its (undoubted) moral corruption while living at a safe distance away in Russia, he still continues to take part in the Anglo-Saxon-dominated World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organizations, which parade women priestesses and make no excuses for homosexuality and other sexual abominations. Surely a man of his prophetic spirit would want to storm out of the Assembly building after delivering a fiery discourse in the spirit of the Prophet Elijah (or Savanorola)... Instead, however, he gladly takes part in services with women priests, and has even called the World Council of Churches "our common home". What is the explanation of such inconsistency and lack of moral delicacy?

Two explanations suggest themselves. The first is suggested by his well-known service as "Agent Mikhailov" in the KGB-FSB. His secret-service masters probably think that spying on Western clergymen and compromising them through the familiar methods used by the KGB (blackmail) is more beneficial to Holy Russia than the more honest and open methods commanded by the Gospel.

The second possible explanation may lie in the fact that his own hierarchy is so thoroughly compromised itself that attacks on the West might elicit counter-attacks that would severely damage his Church's reputation. Thus Fr. Andrei Kuraiev estimates that 50 out of the approximately 300 bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate are gays, while the recently reposed Fr. Gleb Yakunin suggested last year that the figure was closer to 250! This gay lobby in the MP is so powerful and has caused such scandal in Russia since Kuraiev's exposures last year that it might be prudent for the patriarch to lay off speaking about "Eurosodom" for the time being...

But of course there is another solution. His Holiness could send his homosexual bishops - or perhaps the whole hierarchy, just to make sure, - to his equivalent of the pool of Siloam at the hotel "Danilovskaia", where they will have their virginity restored, courtesy of the goddess Aphrodite and at the cost of a few thousand rubles (with higher rates for the richer bishops). And if the goddess Aphrodite objects, because she is used to absolving natural sins, not unnatural ones, then no matter: some Orthodox saint could be enlisted as the patron of such healings, just as Orthodox saints have been enlisted to bless nuclear bombs, space travel and any undertaking that seems

---

<sup>406</sup> "На территории гостиницы «Даниловская» при главном патриаршем монастыре РПЦ МП можно сделать аборт и восстановить девственность", *Portal-Credo.Ru*, 9 March, 2012.

good to the powers that be, whose power, of course, however evil they are, is, was and always will be, from God...

*January 14/27, 2015.  
Apodosis of the Holy Baptism of the Lord.*

### **33. A HISTORY OF THE FALL OF ROCOR, 2000-2007**

*If you see lying and hypocrisy, expose them in front of all, even if they are clothed in purple and fine linen.*

Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) of New York (1906)

*Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*  
Revelation 3.11; the last words of St. Philaret of New York (1985)

*The Holy Flesh hath passed from thee.*  
Jeremiah 11.15

#### **Introduction: The 1990s**

*Who hath remained among you that has seen this House in its former glory, and how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes as it were nothing? But take heart now...  
Haggai 2.3-4.*

The return of the Russian Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) to Russia in 1990 after almost seventy years' exile was undoubtedly one of the most significant events in Church history, comparable to the return of the Jews to Jerusalem after the seventy-year exile in Babylon. And yet this momentous step was taken almost casually, without sufficient forethought or a clearly defined strategy. Hence difficult problems arose, problems that had their roots deep in ROCOR's past history. These problems can be divided into three categories: (A) ROCOR in relation to her own flock at home and abroad, (B) ROCOR in relation to the Catacomb Church, and (C) ROCOR in relation to the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) and the post-Soviet Russian State.

**A. ROCOR in relation to herself.** The problem here is easily stated: how could the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad continue to call herself the Church *Abroad* if she now had parishes *inside* Russia? After all, her *Founding Statute* or Polozhenie stated that ROCOR was an autonomous part of the Autocephalous Russian Church, that part which existed (i) *outside* the bounds of Russia on the basis of Ukaz N 362 of November 7/20, 1920 of Patriarch Tikhon and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, and (ii) *temporarily* until the fall of communism in Russia.<sup>407</sup> With the fall of communism and the creation of ROCOR parishes inside Russia in 1990-91, it would seem that these limitations in space and time no longer applied, and

---

<sup>407</sup> ROCOR's Hierarchical Council of 1956 declared that "the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is an unsevered part of the Local Russian Orthodox Church, being temporarily self-governing on synodal bases, until the abolition of atheist rule in Russia, in accordance with the resolution of the Holy Patriarch, the Holy Synod and the Higher Russian Church Council of November 7/20, 1920, N 362".

that ROCOR had ceased to exist as a temporary Church body existing outside Russia in accordance with her own definition of herself in the Polozhenie.

The solution to this problem would appear to have been obvious: change the Polozhenie! And this was in fact the solution put forward by ROCOR's leading canonist, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe). However, the ROCOR episcopate declined that suggestion, and the Polozhenie remained unchanged.

Why? Although we have no direct evidence on which to base an answer to this question, the following would appear to be a reasonable conclusion from the events as they unfolded in the early 1990s. A change in the Polozhenie that removed the spatial and temporal limitations of ROCOR's self-definition would have had the consequence of forcing ROCOR to define herself as *the* one true Russian Orthodox Church, and therefore to remove the centre of her Church administration from America to Russia and enter into a life-and-death struggle with the MP for the minds and hearts of the Russian people.

However, the ROCOR bishops were not prepared to accept these consequences. After all, they were well-established abroad, increasingly dependent economically on contributions from foreign converts to Orthodoxy, and with few exceptions were not prepared to exchange the comforts and relative security of life in the West for the uncertainty and privations of life in Russia, where, although communism was crumbling, the communist élites were still in place in both Church and State. Of course, the whole *raison d'être* of ROCOR was to return to her homeland in Russia (she was previously called the Russian Church *in Exile*, and exiles by definition want to return to their homeland); and it was in anticipation of such a return that she had steadfastly refused to endanger her Russian identity by merging with other Local Orthodox Churches or by forming local jurisdictions identified with specific western countries (like the formerly Russian schism from ROCOR calling itself the Orthodox Church of America). But generations had passed since the first emigration, the descendants of that first emigration had settled in western countries, learned their languages, adopted their ways, put down roots in foreign soil, married non-Russians (and often, alas, non-Orthodox non-Russians). The exiles were no longer exiles from, but strangers to, their native land...

***B. ROCOR in relation to the Catacomb Church.*** Since 1927, when ROCOR had broken communion simultaneously with the Catacomb Church from Metropolitan Sergius' MP, she had looked upon the Catacomb Church as the True Church inside Russia with which she remained in mystical communion of prayer and sacraments, even if such communion could not be realized in face-to-face meeting and concelebration. Indeed, after the death of Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, the last universally recognised leader of the Russian Church, in 1937, ROCOR commemorated "the episcopate of the persecuted Russian Church", by which was undoubtedly meant the

episcopate of the Catacomb Church. After the war, however, a change began to creep in. On the one hand, news of Catacomb bishops and communities became more and more scarce, and some even began to doubt that the Catacomb Church existed any longer. Thus Archbishop Mark of Berlin declared in the 1990s, when catacombniks were pouring into ROCOR, that the Catacomb Church had died out in the 1950s! On the other hand, some Catacomb priests inside Russia, having lost contact with, and knowledge of, any canonical bishops there might still be inside Russia, began commemorating Metropolitan Anastasy, first-hierarchy of ROCOR.

These tendencies gave rise to the not unnatural perception that the leadership of True Russian Orthodoxy had now passed from inside Russia to outside Russia, to ROCOR. Moreover, the significance of the Catacomb Church began to be lost, as the struggle was increasingly seen to be between the “red church” inside Russia (the MP) and the “white church” outside Russia (ROCOR). Of course, the *idea* of the Catacomb Church remained sacred. But the heroes of the past – the great hieromartyrs of the 1920s and 30s – looked more glorious than their present-day followers. And some even began to look on the “catacombniks”, not as the True Church of Russia clothed in the purple robes of hundreds of thousands of martyrs, but as a spent force – or as uneducated sectarians in need of rescue. They looked on the humble catacombniks, serving, not in the splendid cathedrals of the emigration, but in poor, dingy flats, if not as contemptible, at any rate as unimportant. How could the Russian Church, so splendid in its pre-revolutionary glory, be resurrected on the basis of such poverty?

Now it must be admitted that the Catacomb Church was desperately in need of help. After several decades of constant persecution, her population was aging and scattered, with fewer and fewer priests and almost no bishops, while the infiltration of KGB “plants” tended to make different groups suspicious of each other. ROCOR – the one church authority that all catacombniks agreed was true – could indeed provide an inestimable service to them by restoring their apostolic succession, educating a new generation of priests and helping them to adapt to and take advantage of the new conditions of post-Soviet Russia. But much depended on how tactfully this was done. When the first consecration of a bishop for the Catacomb Church was performed by ROCOR on Archimandrite Lazarus (Zhurbenko), it was said that this was done “in order to regulate the church life of the Catacomb Church”.<sup>408</sup> But what precisely did this “regulation” mean? If the ROCOR bishops saw their role as providing help for the catacombniks in the same way as they had helped the Greek Old Calendarists in 1969-71 – that is, by re-establishing them as an independent “sister-church”, to use the phrase of Metropolitan Philaret of New York, – then there was hope for a truly profitable cooperation. After all, it was not only the catacombniks who

---

<sup>408</sup> “Zaiavlenie Arkhierejskago Sinoda Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej”, *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, N 18 (1423), 15/28 September, 1990, p. 6.

needed help: since the death of the holy Metropolitan Philaret in 1985, ROCOR was beginning to waver in her own faith and piety. Her members needed, in the words of the Lord in Revelation (3.18) to “buy gold tried in the fire” of persecution – and the catacombniks who had passed through the fire of the Soviet persecution had much to offer and instruct them. However, already at a very early stage the impression was created that ROCOR had come into Russia, not in order to unite with the Catacomb Church and work with her for the triumph of True Orthodoxy in Russia, but in order to *replace* her, or at best to gather the remnants of the catacombs under her sole authority...<sup>409</sup>

Moreover, in the years to come the ROCOR Synod sometimes described itself as the *central authority* of the True Russian Church – in spite of the fact that this “central” authority was based, not in Russia, but thousands of miles away in New York!

C. ROCOR in relation to the MP. The Catacomb Church might have forgiven such arrogance if ROCOR had shown herself capable of fighting resolutely against the MP. But here certain compromising tendencies developed abroad bore bitter fruit that was to lead to schism and the collapse of ROCOR’s mission inside Russia. For the ROCOR bishops proved themselves incapable of making up their minds whether it was necessary to fight the MP or help her, whether she was their friend or their enemy, their beloved mother or their hated step-mother!<sup>410</sup>

The root causes of this indecisiveness go back to the post-war period, when large numbers of Christians fleeing to the West from Soviet Russia were joined to ROCOR. In receiving these Christians, little difference was made between those who had belonged to the Catacomb Church, and those who had belonged to the MP. Some, even including bishops, turned out to be KGB agents, and either returned to the MP or remained as “moles” to undermine ROCOR.<sup>411</sup> Others, while sincerely anti-Soviet, were not sufficiently “enchurched” to see the fundamental ecclesiological significance of the schism in the Russian Church. Thus a certain “dilution” in the quality of those joining ROCOR in the second emigration by comparison with the first – and the problem was to get worse with the third and fourth emigrations of the 70s, 80s and 90s – began to affect the confessing stance of the Church as a whole. Even members of the first emigration had proved susceptible to deception, as when all the ROCOR dioceses in China except that of Shanghai (led by St. John Maximovich) were lured back into the arms of the Soviet “Fatherland”

---

<sup>409</sup> Bishop Lazarus complained about this in a conversation with the present writer in Moscow on July 5, 1990.

<sup>410</sup> Fr. Timothy Alferov, “O polozhenii rossijskikh prikhodov RPTsZ v svete itogov patriarkhijnogo sobora”, *Uspensij Listok*, N 34, 2000.

<sup>411</sup> This forced the ROCOR Synod to take special measures to “ferret out” potential spies. See Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), *Pis'ma*, Moscow, 1999.



and its Soviet "Church". It is not surprising, therefore, that later generations, who had only known "Soviet reality", should be still more susceptible to deception.

Another reason for this diminution in zeal proceeded from the fact that ROCOR did not break communion with the Local Orthodox Churches of "World Orthodoxy" even after all of these (except Jerusalem) sent representatives to the local Councils of the MP in 1945 and 1948. The reasons for this depended on the Church in question. Thus communion continued with the Serbian Church because of the debt of gratitude owed to the hospitality shown by the Serbian Church to ROCOR in the inter-war years. Communion continued with the Jerusalem Patriarchate because all churches in the Holy Land, including the ROCOR monasteries, were required, under threat of closure, to commemorate the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Communion also continued in some places with the Greek new calendarists, who were not only in communion with the MP but members of the ecumenist World Council of Churches, because the Ecumenical Patriarchate was powerful in the United States, the country to which ROCOR had moved its headquarters.

This ambiguous relationship towards "World Orthodoxy" in general inevitably began to affect ROCOR's zeal in relation to the MP in particular. For if the MP was recognised by Serbia and Jerusalem, and Serbia and Jerusalem were recognised by ROCOR, the conclusion was drawn that the MP, while bad, was still a Church. And this attitude in turn affected ROCOR's attitude towards the Catacomb Church, which was no longer seen by many, including several bishops, as the one True Church of Russia.

As ROCOR began to lose confidence in herself and the Catacomb Church as the *only* bearers of true Russian Orthodoxy, the accent began to shift towards the preservation, not of Orthodoxy as such, but of *Russianness*. This was bound to fail as a weapon against the MP. For for a foreign Church, however Russian in spirit, to claim to be more Russian than the Russians inside Russia was bound to be perceived as arrogant and humiliating by the latter (especially in the mouth of an ethnic *German* such as Archbishop Mark of Berlin!). And so the MP was able to mount a successful counter-attack, claiming for itself the mantle of "Russianness" as against the "American" church of ROCOR.

As a result of all this, at the very moment that ROCOR was called by God to enter into an open war with the MP for the souls of the Russian people on Russian soil, she found herself tactically unprepared, hesitant, unsure of her ability to fight this great enemy, unsure even whether this enemy was in fact an enemy. And this attitude guaranteed the collapse of the mission. For "if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will rise up and prepare for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14.8). Looking more at her enemies than at the Lord, she began, like the Apostle Peter, to sink beneath the waves. Many even began to think

that it was time to “forgive and forget” and join the MP; for “if you can’t beat them – join them!” And so the MP which, at the beginning of the 90s had been seriously rattled, recovered her confidence and her position in public opinion.

The problems began on May 3/16, 1990, when the ROCOR Synod under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov) issued a statement that was in general strongly anti-MP, but which contained the qualification that there might nevertheless be true priests dispensing valid sacraments in the patriarchate. The idea that there can be true priests in a heretical church is canonical nonsense (Apostolic Canon 46, First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil the Great), and Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) immediately obtained the removal of the offending phrase. But the damage had been done.

Then serious problems began to develop between ROCOR bishops living inside Russia and those visiting from abroad. In 1993 the first schism took place. This was patched up, but in 1995 there was a second, and the five bishops and thousands of laity led by Bishop Valentine of Suzdal were expelled from ROCOR’s ranks.<sup>412</sup>

In addition three events took place that accentuated the crisis: (i) the adoption of a new ecclesiology, (ii) the return of the KGB to power, and (iii) the MP’s “Jubilee” Sobor of the year 2000.

Let us look at each of these in turn.

**1. The Adoption of a New Ecclesiology.** In 1994 ROCOR entered into communion with the “Cyprianite” Greek Old Calendarists, so called because of their leader, Metropolitan Cyprian (Kotsumbas) of Fili and Oropo, who had been defrocked by the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostomos (Kioussis) of Athens in 1986. The significance of the Cyprianites lay in their espousal of an heretical ecclesiology, according to which heretics remain inside the Church until they have been expelled by an Ecumenical Council. This enabled them to claim that the ecumenist heretics of “World Orthodoxy”, who belonged to the World Council of Churches (WCC), were still inside the True Church in spite of the fact that they were heretics. When ROCOR entered into communion with the Cyprianites, it officially accepted this heretical ecclesiology. This enabled its leaders to affirm that the Moscow Patriarchate, although heretical because of its submission to, and control by, the communists (sergianism) and its membership of the WCC (ecumenism), was still a True Church with the grace of sacraments.

The 1994 decision was far from unanimously approved. At the 1993 Council, when the subject was first discussed, Archbishop Anthony of Los

---

<sup>412</sup> See V. Moss, “New Zion in Babylon, part 6”, [http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/264\\_NEW\\_ZION\\_IN\\_BABYLON\\_PART\\_6.pdf](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/264_NEW_ZION_IN_BABYLON_PART_6.pdf).

Angeles, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) and Bishop Cyril of Seattle spoke against the union, which would contradict ROCOR's decision of 1975 not to enter into union with any of the Greek Old Calendarist Synods until they had attained unity amongst themselves. However, Archbishops Laurus and Mark said that it was awkward to refuse communion with Cyprian when they were already in communion with the Romanian Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Vlasie, with whom Cyprian was in communion. (This was somewhat disingenuous, since it had been Mark who had engineered the union with the Romanians in the first place.)

At the 1993 Council a commission was set up consisting of Archbishop Laurus, Bishop Metrophanes and Bishop Daniel which prepared the way for the eventual decision to unite with Cyprian at the 1994 Council. However, at the 1994 Council Bishop Daniel continued to express doubts, and Bishop Benjamin of the Kuban, now (in 2011) the second hierarch of the Russian True Orthodox Church, refused to sign the union together with Bishop Ambrose of Vevey. And there were rumours that Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles had signed only under pressure.

The leaders of ROCOR tried to prove that this "Cyprianite" ecclesiology had always been the ecclesiology of ROCOR and of her sister Church in the Soviet Union, the Catacomb Church. But among the many facts that contradicted their claim was a recent major decision of the ROCOR Sobor of Bishops in 1983 under the leadership of the last Metropolitan, Philaret of New York (+1985) – its anathema against ecumenism. No impartial reading of this anathema could fail to come to the conclusion that it anathematized all the ecumenists of World Orthodoxy, including the Moscow Patriarchate. Therefore the decision of 1994, with its acceptance of the Moscow Patriarchate, contradicted the decision of 1983, with its rejection of the Moscow Patriarchate. The future of ROCOR depended on which of these "two traditions" in ecclesiology triumphed, the tradition of Metropolitan Philaret, whose relics were found to be incorrupt in 1998<sup>413</sup>, or the tradition of the new leaders of ROCOR...

After the decision Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) wrote that the Cyprianites "confess their own and by no means Orthodox teaching on the possibility of the grace-filled action of the Holy Spirit in churches that have clearly become heretical". Moreover he declared: "In passing this Resolution on communion with the group of Metropolitan Cyprian, our Council has unfortunately also forgotten about the text of the Resolution accepted earlier under the

---

<sup>413</sup> All those present were greatly upset and grieved by the fact that during the pannikhida, as during the All-Night Vigil and the Liturgy, the coffin with the relics of St. Philaret remained sealed. In spite of the numerous requests of clergy and laity, who had specially come to Jordanville so as to kiss the relics of the holy hierarch, Archbishop Laurus refused to open the coffin. He also very strictly forbade making photocopies from the shots that had already been taken of the incorrupt relics of the saint or even to show them to anyone.

presidency of Metropolitan Philaret, which anathematized the ecumenical heresy... In fact, by not looking into the matter seriously and forgetting about the anathematizing of the new calendarist ecumenists that was confirmed earlier (and perhaps not having decided to rescind this resolution), our Council, however terrible it may be to admit it, has fallen under its own anathema... Do we have to think that our Hierarchical Council has entered on the path of betraying the patristic traditions, or only that out of a misunderstanding it has allowed a mistake which it is not yet too late to correct at the November session in France?"<sup>414</sup>

However, the mistake was not corrected at the second session of the Hierarchical Council in Lesna in November, 1994. Instead, the decision was made to initiate negotiations with the MP. Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles commented on this to the present writer: "ROCOR is going to hell..."

**2. The Return of the KGB.** The former KGB Colonel Konstantin Preobrazhensky writes: "After the democratic reforms of the 1990s the KGB officers managed to get everything back. All the Directorates of the Soviet KGB are reunited now in today's FSB, except two of them: the First, which managed intelligence, and the Ninth, which guarded the highest Communist bureaucrats. Both are formally independent, but keep close connections with the FSB... The former First Chief Directorate of the KGB is now called the Foreign Intelligence Service. It is successfully managing the operation 'ROCOR'"<sup>415</sup> – that is, the absorption of ROCOR into the MP.<sup>416</sup>

The intelligence experts Christopher Andrew and Vasily Mitrokhin confirm this assessment: "Ridiculed and reviled at the end of the Soviet era, the Russian intelligence community has since been remarkably successful at reinventing itself and recovering its political influence. The last three prime ministers of the Russian Federation during Boris Yeltsin's presidency – Yevgeni Primakov, Sergei Stepashin and Vladimir Putin – were all former intelligence chiefs. Putin, who succeeded Yeltsin as President in 2000, is the only FCD [First Chief Directorate] officer ever to become Russian leader. According to the head of the SVR [Foreign Intelligence Service], Sergei Nikolayevich Lebedev, 'The president's understanding of intelligence activity and the opportunity to speak the same language to him makes our work considerably easier.' No previous head of state in Russia, or perhaps anywhere else in the world, has ever surrounded himself with so many former intelligence officers. Putin also has more direct control of intelligence than any Russian leader since Stalin. According to Kirpichenko, 'We are under

---

<sup>414</sup> Grabbe, "The Dubious Ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian's Group", *Church News*, no. 5, September-October, 1994, pp. 2-4; "Arkhierejskij Sobor RPTsZ 1994 goda: Istoria Priniatia Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkoviu Yereticheskoy Ekkleziologii Mitropolita Kipriana", *Sviataia Rus'*, 2003; *Vernost*, 98, December, 2007.

<sup>415</sup> Preobrazhensky, "Ecumenism and Intelligence".

<sup>416</sup> Preobrazhensky, "Hostile Absorption of ROCOR".

the control of the President and his administration, because intelligence is directly subordinated to the President and only the President.' But whereas Stalin's intelligence chiefs usually told him simply what he wanted to hear, Kirpichenko claims that, 'Now, we tell it like it is'.

"The mission statement of today's FSB and SVR is markedly different from that of the KGB. At the beginning of the 1980s Andropov proudly declared that the KGB was playing its part in the onward march of world revolution. By contrast, the current 'National Security Concept' of the Russian Federation, adopted at the beginning of the new millennium, puts the emphasis instead on the defence of traditional Russian values: 'Guaranteeing the Russian Federation's national security also includes defence of the cultural and spiritual-moral inheritance, historical traditions and norms of social life, preservation of the cultural property of all the peoples of Russia, formation of state policy in the sphere of the spiritual and moral education of the population...' One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Soviet intelligence system from Cheka to KGB was its militant atheism. In March 2002, however, the FSB at last found God. A restored Russian Orthodox church in central Moscow was consecrated by Patriarch Aleksii II as the FSB's parish church in order to minister to the previously neglected spiritual needs of its staff. The FSB Director, Nikolai Patrushev, and the Patriarch celebrated the mystical marriage of the Orthodox Church and the state security apparatus by a solemn exchange of gifts. Patrushev presented a symbolic golden key of the church and an icon of St. Aleksei, Moscow Metropolitan, to the Patriarch, who responded by giving the FSB Director the Mother God 'Umilenie' icon and an icon representing Patrushev's own patron saint, St. Nikolai – the possession of which would formerly have been a sufficiently grave offence to cost any KGB officer his job. Though the FSB has not, of course, become the world's first intelligence agency staffed only or mainly by Christian true believers, there have been a number of conversions to the Orthodox Church by Russian intelligence officers past and present – among them Nikolai Leonov, who half a century ago was the first to alert the Centre to the revolutionary potential of Fidel Castro. 'Spirituality' has become a common theme in FSB public relations materials. While head of FSB public relations in 1999-2001, Vasili Stavitsky published several volumes of poetry with a strong 'spiritual' content, among them *Secrets of the Soul* (1999); a book of 'spiritual-patriotic' poems for children entitled *Light a Candle, Mamma* (1999); and *Constellation of Love: Selected Verse* (2000). Many of Stavitsky's poems have been set to music and recorded on CDs, which are reported to be popular at FSB functions.

"Despite their unprecedented emphasis on 'spiritual security', however, the FSB and SVR are politicized intelligence agencies which keep track of President Putin's critics and opponents among the growing Russian diaspora abroad, as well as in Russia itself. During his first term in office, while affirming his commitment to democracy and human rights, Putin gradually

succeeded in marginalizing most opposition and winning control over television channels and the main news media. The vigorous public debate of policy issues during the Yeltsin years has largely disappeared. What has gradually emerged is a new system of social control in which those who step too far out of line face intimidation by the FSB and the courts. The 2003 State Department annual report on human rights warned that a series of alleged espionage cases involving scientists, journalists and environmentalists 'caused continuing concerns regarding the lack of due process and the influence of the FSB in court cases'. According to Lyudmilla Alekseyeva, the current head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, which has been campaigning for human rights in Russia since 1976, 'The only thing these scientists, journalists and environmentalists are guilty of is talking to foreigners, which in the Soviet Union was an unpardonable offence.' Though all this remains a far cry from the KGB's obsession with even the most trivial forms of ideological subversion, the FSB has once again defined a role for itself as an instrument of social control..."<sup>417</sup>

The central figure in this "spiritualization" but at the same time "re-sovietization" of Russia was Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. Coming to power on January 1, 2000, he presented himself as "all things to all men": a chekist to the chekists, a democrat to the democrats, a nationalist to the nationalists, and an Orthodox to the Orthodox. Putin's propagandist Yegor Kholmogorov has written: "Putin's power was, from the very beginning, non-electoral in origin, it was not a matter of being 'appointed by Yeltsin', but of what the Chinese call 'the mandate of heaven', an unquestioned right to power..."<sup>418</sup> Putin was indeed resembling a Chinese emperor more than a democratic politician, not only in his political style, but also in his fabulous personal wealth, calculated at \$40 billion..."<sup>419</sup>

Putin is no believer. On September 8, 2000, when asked by the American television journalist Larry King whether he believed in God, he replied: "I believe in people..." Moreover, as George Spruksts writes,

- "1) he lights menorahs when he worships at his local synagogue;
- "2) he has worshipped the mortal remains of Kim Il Sung in North Korea;
- "3) he has worshipped the mortal remains of Mahatma Gandhi;
- "4) he 'believes not in God, but in Man' (as he himself has stated);

---

<sup>417</sup> Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The KGB and the World. The Mitrokhin Archive II*, London: Penguin, 2006, pp 490-492.

<sup>418</sup> Kholmogorov, "Kremlevskij Mechtatel'" (Kremlin Dreamer), *Spetsnaz Rossii (Russia's Special Forces)*, 2000/2.

<sup>419</sup> See Luke Harding, "Putin, the Kremlin power struggle and the \$40bn fortune", *The Guardian*, December 21, 2007, pp. 1-2.

"5) he was initiated into an especially occult form of 'knighthood' (read: freemasonry) in Germany;

"6) he has restored the communist anthem;

"7) he has restored the bloody red rag as the RF's military banner;

"8) he has not removed the satanic pentagram from public buildings (including cathedrals);

"9) he has plans of restoring the monument to 'Butcher' Dzerzhinsky [now fulfilled];

"10) he has not removed the satanic mausoleum in Red Square nor its filthy contents."<sup>420</sup>

Preobrazhensky points out that Putin "began his career not in the intelligence ranks but in the 'Fifth Branch' of the Leningrad Regional KGB, which also fought religion and the Church. Putin carefully hides this fact from foreign church leaders, and you will not find it in any of his official biographies... The myth of Putin's religiosity is important for proponents of 'the union'. It allows Putin to be characterized as some Orthodox Emperor Constantine, accepting the perishing Church Abroad under his regal wing. For his kindness we should be stretching out our arms to him with tears of gratitude..."<sup>421</sup>

"For those who claim," writes Professor Olga Ackerly, "that the 'CIS is different from the USSR' and Putin is a 'practising Orthodox Christian', here are some sobering facts. The first days and months Putin's presidency were highlighted by the reestablishment of a memorial plaque on Kutuzovsky Prospect where Andropov used to live. The plaque was a symbol of communist despotism missing since the 1991 putsch, bearing Andropov's name - a former head of the KGB, especially known for his viciousness in the use of force and psychiatric clinics for dissidents. On May 9, 2000, Putin proposed a toast to the 'genius commander' Iosif Stalin and promoted many former KGB officers to the highest state positions..."

"Important to note is that the Eurasian movement, with ties to occultism, ecumenism, etc. was recently revived by Putin, and a Congress entitled 'The All-Russian Political Social Movement', held in Moscow in April of 2001, was

---

<sup>420</sup> Sprukts, "Re: [paradosis] A Russian Conversation in English", [orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com), 24 June, 2004.

<sup>421</sup> Preobrazhensky, *KGB/FSB's New Trojan Horse: Americans of Russian Descent*, North Billerica, Ma.: Gerard Group Publishing, 2008, p. 97; *KGB v russkoj emigratsii* (The KGB in the Russian Emigration), New York: Liberty Publishing House, 2006, p. 102.

'created on the basis of the Eurasian ideology and *inter-confessional* [sic!] harmony in support of the reforms of President Vladimir Putin.' The movement is led by Alexander Dugin, a sexual mystic, National Bolshevik Party member, son of a Cheka cadre, personally familiar with the so-called 'Black International', advisor to the State Duma, and participant in Putin's 'Unity' movement."<sup>422</sup>

Banking on the high price of Russian oil, Putin began to rebuild Russia's economic and military might. But the corruption (often State-sponsored) within the Russian economy hindered the diversification of the economy that he needed. From 2003 Putin moved to reverse the main gains of the liberal 1990s – religious freedom, and a more open and honest attitude to the Soviet past. Churches were seized from True Orthodox Christians and their websites hacked; elections were rigged, independent journalists were killed, and independent businessmen imprisoned on trumped-up charges. New history books justifying Stalinism were introduced into the classrooms. Youth organizations similar to the Hitler Youth were created.<sup>423</sup> Putin's Russia began to resemble Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

The MP has shown complete loyalty to Putinism, and takes an enthusiastic part in the criminal economy. This is illustrated by the activities of the recently elected patriarch, Cyril Gundiaev, who imports tobacco and alcohol duty-free and is now one of the richest men in Russia.<sup>424</sup> And so it is Putin who personally brokered the union of the MP and ROCOR, an idea first mooted by Archbishop Mark in 1997 and by Archbishop Laurus on July 17, 1999...<sup>425</sup>

**3. The MP's "Jubilee" Council.** Following the instructions of the KGB, in August, 2000 the MP held a "Jubilee" Hierarchical Council whose main purpose was to remove the obstacles towards ROCOR's unification with it. These obstacles, as formulated by ROCOR during the decade 1990-2000 were: (a) Ecumenism, (b) Sergianism, and (c) the Glorification of the New Martyrs, especially the Royal New Martyrs.

---

<sup>422</sup> Ackerly, "High Treason in ROCOR: The Rapprochement with Moscow", pp. 21, 25.

<sup>423</sup> Edward Lucas, *The New Cold War*, London: Bloomsbury, 2008, p. 102.

<sup>424</sup> "After the fall of the Soviet Union, the church received official privileges including the right to import duty-free alcohol and tobacco. In 1995, the Nikolo-Ugreshky Monastery, which is directly subordinated to the patriarchate, earned \$350 million from the sale of alcohol. The patriarchate's department of foreign church relations, which Kirill ran, earned \$75 million from the sale of tobacco. But the patriarchate reported an annual budget in 1995-1996 of only \$2 million. Kirill's personal wealth was estimated in *Moscow News* in 2006 to be \$4 billion." (<http://news-nftu.blogspot.com>, February, 2009).

<sup>425</sup> Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, "Appeal to the West European Clergy", December 15, 2000; *Church News*, vol. 12, N 9 (91), p. 4. There were strong suspicions that both Laurus and Mark were KGB agents. For more on Putin and his relations with ROCOR, see Peter Budzilovich, "Vstrecha so 'Stalinym'", <http://www.listok.com/heresy28.htm>, and Preobrazhensky, *KGB/FSB's New Trojan Horse*, *op. cit.*, chapter 2.



(a) *Ecumenism*. In the document on relations with the heterodox, it was declared that “the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ, created by our Lord and Saviour Himself...”; “The Church of Christ is one and unique...”; “The so-called ‘branch theory’, which affirms the normality and even the providentiality of the existence of Christianity in the form of separate ‘branches’... is completely unacceptable.” However, wrote Protopriest Michael Ardov, “the ‘patriarchal liberals’ will also not be upset, insofar as the heretics in the cited document are called ‘heterodox’, while the Monophysite communities are called the ‘Eastern Orthodox Churches’. And the ‘dialogues with the heterodox’ will be continued, and it is suggested that the World Council of Churches be not abandoned, but reformed...”<sup>426</sup>

The MP’s Fr. (now Metropolitan) Hilarion (Alfeyev) explained the origins of the document on ecumenism: “The subject of inter-Christian relations has been used by various groups (within the Church) as a bogey in partisan wars. In particular, it has been used to criticise Church leaders who, as is well known, have taken part in ecumenical activities over many years.” In Alfeyev’s opinion, “ecumenism has also been used by breakaway groups, such as the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Old Calendarists, to undermine people’s trust in the Church.” Therefore there was a need “for a clear document outlining the theological basis of the Russian Orthodox Church’s attitude towards heterodoxy, i.e. the question of why we need and whether we need dialogue with the non-Orthodox confessions, and if so which form this dialogue should take.” Fr. Hilarion refused to answer the question whether the Council would discuss the matter of the participation of the MP in the WCC, but said that the patriarchate felt obliged to continue negotiations with Protestant and Catholic representatives in the WCC and to be a part of the ecumenical committee.<sup>427</sup>

After the Council, there was no let-up in the MP’s ecumenical activities. Thus on August 18, “Patriarch” Alexis prayed together with the Armenian “Patriarch”. And on April 21, 2005, he congratulated the new Pope Benedict XVI on his accession, and expressed the hope that he would strive to develop relations between the two churches. When asked how he evaluated Pope John Paul II’s ministry, he replied: “His Holiness’ teachings have not only strengthened Catholics throughout the world in their faith, but also borne witness to Christianity in the complex world of today.”<sup>428</sup> After ROCOR joined the MP in 2007, the MP noticeably increased its ecumenical activities and its relationship with the Vatican continued to improve...

---

<sup>426</sup> Ardov, “The ‘Jubilee Council’ has confirmed it: the Moscow Patriarchate has finally fallen away from Orthodoxy” (Report read at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the clergy, monastics and laity of the Suzdal diocese of the Russian Orthodox [Autonomous] Church, November, 2000).

<sup>427</sup> *Church News*, vol. 12, N 6 (88), July-August, 2000, p. 8. Alfeyev had already shown his ecumenist colours in his book, *The Mystery of Faith* (first published in Moscow in Russian in 1996, in English by Darton, Longman and Todd in 2002), which was strongly criticised from within the MP by Fr. Valentine Asmus.

<sup>428</sup> *Associated Press*, April 21, 2005; *Corriere della Sera*, April 24, 2005.

(b) *Sergianism*. The MP approved a “social document” which, among other things, recognised that “the Church must refuse to obey the State” “if the authorities force the Orthodox believers to renounce Christ and His Church”. As we shall see, enormous significance was attached to this phrase by ROCOR. However, on the very same page we find: “But even the persecuted Church is called to bear the persecutions patiently, not refusing loyalty to the State that persecutes it”.<sup>429</sup> We may infer from this that the MP still considers that its loyalty to the Soviet State was right and the resistance to it shown by the Catacomb Church was wrong. So, contrary to first appearances, the MP remained mired in sergianism.

Indeed, sergianism as such was not mentioned in the document, much less repented of. This is consistent with the fact that the MP has never in its entire history since 1943 shown anything other than a determination to serve whatever appears to be the strongest forces in the contemporary world. Until the fall of communism, that meant the communists. With the fall of communism, the MP was not at first sure whom she had to obey, but gradually assumed the character of a “populist” church, trying to satisfy the various factions within it (including nominally Orthodox political leaders) while preserving an appearance of unity.

Since Putin came to power in January, 2000, the MP has appeared to be reverting to its submissive role in relation to the Soviets, not protesting against the restoration of the red flag to the armed forces and approving the retention of the music of the Soviet national anthem. There has even been an official justification of Sergianism. Thus on July 18, 2002, the Moscow Synod ratified a document entitled “The relationships between the Russian Orthodox Church and the authorities in the 20s and 30s”, which declared: “The aim of normalising the relationship with the authorities cannot be interpreted as a betrayal of Church interests. It was adopted by the holy Patriarch Tikhon, and was also expressed in the so-called ‘Epistle of the Solovki Bishops’ in 1926, that is, one year before the publication of ‘The Epistle of the deputy patriarchal *locum tenens* and temporary patriarchal Synod’. The essence of the changes in the position of the hierarchy consisted in the fact that the Church, having refused to recognise the legitimacy of the new power established after the October revolution in 1917, as the power became stronger later, had to recognise it as a state power and establish bilateral relations with it. This position is not blameworthy; historically, the Church has more than once found herself in a situation in which it has had to

---

<sup>429</sup> *Iubilejnij Arkhierejskij Sobor Russkoj pravoslavnoj tserkvi. Moskva 13-16 avgusta 2000 goda* (The Jubilee Hierarchical Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow, 13-16 August, 2000), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 159.

cooperate with non-orthodox rulers (for instance, in the period of the Golden Horde or the Muslim Ottoman Empire)."<sup>430</sup>

However, Soviet power was very different from the Tatars or Ottomans, and "bilateral relations" with it, unlike with those powers, involved the betrayal of the Orthodox Faith and falling under the anathema of the Church. Moreover, if the Church at first refused to recognise Soviet power, but then (in 1927) began to recognise it, the question arises: which position was the correct one? There can be no question but that the position endorsed by the Moscow Council of 1917-18, when Bolshevik power was anathematized, was the correct one, and that the sergianist Moscow Patriarchate, by renouncing that position, betrayed the truth – and continues to betray it to the present day through its symbiotic relationship with a government that openly declares itself to be the heir of the Soviet State.

(c) *The New Martyrs*. With regard to the New Martyrs, the major problems from the patriarchate's point of view were the questions of the Royal Martyrs, on the one hand, and of the martyrs of the Catacomb Church who rejected Metropolitan Sergius, on the other. Non-royal martyrs killed before the schism with the Catacomb Church could be "safely" canonized. Thus in 1989, the MP canonized Patriarch Tikhon, and in 1992 it canonized three more martyrs and set up a commission to inquire into the martyrdom of the Royal Family, about which an MP publication wrote in 1998: "No less if not more dangerous as an ecclesiastical falsification is the MP's Canonization Commission, headed by Metropolitan Juvenal (Poiarkov), which has suggested a compromise glorification of Tsar Nicholas Alexandrovich: 'Yes, he was guilty of the tragedy on Khodynka field, he hobnobbed with Rasputin, he offended the workers, the country became backward. In general as a ruler of a state he was completely useless. Most important, he brought the country to revolution. But he suffered for Christ...' Such a falsification will only continue that dirty stream of slander which the Christ-fighters began to pour out already long before 1917..."<sup>431</sup>

After nearly a decade of temporising, the MP finally, under pressure from its flock, glorified the Royal New Martyrs and many other martyrs of the Soviet yoke at the Jubilee Council. The glorification of the Royal New Martyrs was a compromise decision, reflecting the very different attitudes towards them in the patriarchate. The Royal Martyrs were called "passion-bearers" rather than "martyrs", and it was made clear that they were being glorified, not for the way in which they lived their lives, but for the meekness with which they faced their deaths. This allowed the anti-monarchists to feel that Nicholas was still the "bloody Nicholas" of Soviet mythology, and that it was

---

<sup>430</sup> *Moskovskij Tserkovnij Vestnik* (Moscow Church Herald), NN 14-15, pp. 243-244; quoted by Fr. Michael Ardov, <http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=english&id=13>.

<sup>431</sup> *Pravoslavie ili Smert'* (Orthodoxy or Death), N 8, 1998.

“Citizen Romanov” rather than “Tsar Nicholas” who had been glorified - the man rather than the monarchical principle for which he stood.

As regards the other martyrs, Sergius Kanaev writes: “In the report of the President of the Synodal Commission for the canonisation of the saints, Metropolitan Juvenal (Poiarkov), the criterion of holiness adopted... for Orthodox Christians who had suffered during the savage persecutions was clearly and unambiguously declared to be submission ‘to the lawful leadership of the Church’, which was Metropolitan Sergius and his hierarchy. With such an approach, the holiness of the ‘sergianist martyrs’ was incontestable. The others were glorified or not glorified depending on the degree to which they ‘were in separation from the lawful leadership of the Church’. Concerning those who were not in agreement with the politics of Metropolitan Sergius, the following was said in the report: ‘In the actions of the “right” oppositionists, who are often called the “non-commemorators”, one cannot find evil-intentioned, exclusively personal motives. Their actions were conditioned by their understanding of what was for the good of the Church’. In my view, this is nothing other than blasphemy against the New Martyrs and a straight apology for sergianism. With such an approach the consciously sergianist Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), for example, becomes a ‘saint’, while his ideological opponent Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd, who was canonized by our Church, is not glorified... Metropolitan Seraphim was appointed by Sergius (Stragorodsky) in the place of Metropolitan Joseph, who had been ‘banned’ by him.”<sup>432</sup>

Other Catacomb martyrs were “glorified” by the MP because their holiness was impossible to hide. Thus the relics of Archbishop Victor of Vyatka were found to be incorrupt and now lie in a patriarchal cathedral – although he was the very first bishop officially to break with Sergius and called him and his church organization graceless! Again, the reputation of Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan was too great to be ignored, in spite of the fact that by the end of his life his position differed in no way from that of St. Victor.

Some, seeing the glorification of the Catacomb martyrs by their opponents, remembered the Lord’s words: “Ye build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets’. Therefore ye bear witness against yourselves that ye are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up the measure of your fathers!” (Matthew 23.29-32).

---

<sup>432</sup> Kanaev, “Obraschenie k pervoierarkhu RPTsZ” (Address to the First Hierarchy of the ROCOR), in Zhukov, *Otkliki na deiania Arkhierejskogo Sobor RPTsZ 2000 goda i na prochie posleduischie za nim sobytia* (Reactions to the Acts of the Hierarchical Council of the ROCOR in 2000 and to other events that followed it), part 2, Paris, 2001, pp. 3-4 ; *Iubilejniy Arkhierejskij Sobor*, op. cit., pp. 43, 44.

This blasphemous canonisation of *both* the true *and* the false martyrs, thereby downgrading the exploit of the true martyrs, had been predicted by the ROCOR priest Fr. Oleg Oreshkin: "I think that some of those glorified will be from the sergianists so as to deceive the believers. 'Look,' they will say, 'he is a saint, a martyr, in the Heavenly Kingdom, and he recognized the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, so you must be reconciled with it and its fruits.' This will be done not in order to glorify martyrdom for Christ's sake, but in order to confirm the sergianist politics."<sup>433</sup>

The main thing from the MP's point of view was that their founder, Metropolitan Sergius, should be given equal status with the catacomb martyrs whom he persecuted. Thus in 1997 the patriarch said: "Through the host of martyrs the Church of Russia bore witness to her faith and sowed the seed of her future rebirth. Among the confessors of Christ we can in full measure name... his Holiness Patriarch Sergius."<sup>434</sup>

By the time of the council of 2000, the MP still did not feel able to canonize Sergius – probably because it feared that it would prevent a union with ROCOR. But neither did it canonize the leader of the Catacomb Church, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. This suggested that a canonization of the two leaders was in the offing, but depended on the success of the negotiations between the MP and ROCOR.

The patriarch's lack of ecclesiastical principle and ecclesiological consistency in this question was pointed out by Fr. Peter Perekrestov: "In the introduction to one article ("In the Catacombs", *Sovershenno Sekretno*, № 7, 1991) Patriarch Alexis wrote the following: 'I believe that our martyrs and righteous ones, regardless of whether they followed Metropolitan Sergius or did not agree with his position, pray together for us.' At the same time, in the weekly, *Nedelya*, № 2, 1/92, the same Patriarch Alexis states that the Russian Church Abroad is a schismatic church, and adds: 'Equally uncanonical is the so-called "Catacomb" Church.' In other words, he recognizes the martyrs of the Catacomb Church, many of whom were betrayed to the godless authorities by Metropolitan Sergius's church organization..., and at the same time declares that these martyrs are schismatic and uncanonical!"<sup>435</sup>

For in the last resort, as Fr. Peter pointed out, for the MP this whole matter was not one of truth or falsehood, but of *power*: "It is not important to them whether a priest is involved in shady business dealings or purely church activities; whether he is a democrat or a monarchist; whether an ecumenist or a zealot; whether he wants to serve Vigil for six hours or one; whether the

---

<sup>433</sup> "Ierei o. Oleg otvechaet na voprosy redaktsiii" (The Priest Fr. Oleg Replies to the Questions of the Editors), *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 23 (1452), December 1/14, 1991, p. 7.

<sup>434</sup> Quoted by Fr. Peter Perekrestov, "The Schism in the Heart of Russia (Concerning Sergianism)", *Canadian Orthodox Herald*, 1999, N 4.

<sup>435</sup> Perekrestov, "Why Now?" *Orthodox Life*, vol. 44, N 6, November-December, 1994, p. 44.

priest serves a panikhida for the victims who defended the White House or a moleben for those who sided with Yeltsin; whether the priest wants to baptize by immersion or by sprinkling; whether he serves in the catacombs or openly; whether he venerates the Royal Martyrs or not; whether he serves according to the New or Orthodox Calendar - *it really doesn't matter*. The main thing is to commemorate Patriarch Alexis. Let the Church Abroad have its autonomy, let it even speak out, express itself as in the past, but only under one condition: *commemorate Patriarch Alexis*. This is a form of **Papism** - let the priests be married, let them serve according to the Eastern rite - it makes no difference, what is important is that they commemorate the Pope of Rome."<sup>436</sup>

It is open to question whether the patriarchate's canonisation of even the true martyrs is pleasing to God. Thus when 50 patriarchal bishops uncovered the relics of Patriarch Tikhon in the Donskoj cemetery on April 5, 1992, witnesses reported that "it was even possible to recognise the face of the Patriarch from his incorrupt visage, and his mantia and mitre were also preserved in complete incorruption. Witnesses also speak about a beautiful fragrance and an unusual feeling of reverential peace at that moment. But then, as some patriarchal clerics confirm, on contact with the air the relics crumbled, or - as the Catacomb Christians remark - the relics were not given into the hands of the Moscow Patriarchate. Then they buried them in plaster - a blasphemous act from an Orthodox point of view..."<sup>437</sup>

The ROCOR clergy of Kursk wrote about the MP council as follows: "Everywhere there is the same well-known style: pleasing the 'right' and the 'left', the Orthodox and the ecumenists, 'yours' and 'ours', without the slightest attempt at definiteness, but with, on the other hand, a careful preservation of the whole weight of the sins of the past and present".<sup>438</sup>

The "Jubilee Sobor" was final proof, if proof were needed, that the MP had not repented and could not repent unless its higher echelons were removed and the whole church apparatus was thoroughly purged.

The question now was: how was ROCOR going to react?

### I. "The Second October Revolution"

In October, 2000, a Hierarchical Council of ROCOR took place in New York under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly. In almost all its acts it represented a reaction to, and to a very large extent an approval of, the acts of the Moscow council. The most important were three conciliar epistles addressed: the first to the Serbian Patriarch Paul, the second "To the Beloved

---

<sup>436</sup> Perekrestov, "Why Now?" *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>437</sup> Eugene Polyakov, personal communication, April 5, 1992.

<sup>438</sup> "Obraschenie kurskogo dukhovenstva k mitropolitu Vitaliu" (Address of the Kursk Clergy to Metropolitan Vitaly), *Otkliki*, *op. cit.*, part 3, p. 80.

Children of the Church in the Homeland and in the Diaspora” and the third “To the Supporters of the Old Rites”.

The first of these epistles, dated October 26, declared that ROCOR and the Serbs were “brothers by blood and by faith” and that “we have always valued the eucharistic communion between our sister-Churches and the desire to preserve the consolation of this communion to the end of time”. And towards the end of the Epistle we read: “We beseech your Holiness not to estrange us from liturgical communion with you”.

It should be remembered that this was written only two years after ROCOR had officially reissued its anathema on ecumenism, and only a few months after the Serbian Patriarch himself had said that there was *no* communion between his Church and ROCOR, calling ROCOR a “church” only in inverted commas! Moreover, as recently as September, 2000, the official publication of the Serbian Church, *Pravoslav'e*, had reported that, at the invitation of the patriarchate there had arrived in Belgrade a Catholic delegation, which had made a joint declaration witnessing to the fact that Serbian hierarchs had been praying together with the Catholics for the last three weeks! So, having justly anathematised the Serbs as heretics, and having witnessed the continuation of their heretical activity, ROCOR was now *begging* to be brought back into communion with the heretics!

Why? The reason became clear later in the Epistle: “A miracle has taken place, the prayers of the host of Russian New Martyrs have been heard: the atheist power that threatened the whole world has unexpectedly, before our eyes, fallen! Now we observe with joy and hope how the process of spiritual regeneration foretold by our saints has begun, and in parallel with it *the gradual return to health of the Church administration in Russia*. This process is difficult and is not being carried forward without opposition. Nevertheless, a radiant indicator of it is the recent glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia headed by the slaughtered Royal Family and the condemnation of the politics of cooperation with the godless authorities which took place at the last Council of the Russian Church in Moscow.

“There still remain other serious wounds in the leadership of the Russian Church which hinder our spiritual rapprochement. Nevertheless, we pray God that He may heal them, too, by the all-powerful grace of the Holy Spirit. Then there must take place the longed-for rapprochement and, God willing, the spiritual union between the two torn-apart parts of the Russian Church – that which is in the Homeland, and that which has gone abroad. *We pray your Holiness to grant your assistance in this.*”

So the ROCOR bishops – this letter was signed by all of them without exception – were asking a heretic anathematised for ecumenism to help them to enter into communion with other anathematised ecumenists – their old

enemies in Moscow, whom they now characterised in glowing and completely false terms as if they had already returned to Orthodoxy! Why, then, should the ROCOR bishops continue to speak of ecumenism as an obstacle to union with the MP? As the Kursk clergy pointed out: "It is not clear how long, in view of the declared unity with the Serbian patriarchate, this last obstacle [ecumenism] to union with the MP will be seen as vital".<sup>439</sup>

The second of the epistles, dated October 27, made several very surprising statements. First, it again spoke of "the beginning of a real spiritual awakening" in Russia. Considering that less than 1% of the Russian population goes to the MP, then, even if the spiritual state of the MP were brilliant, this would hardly constitute "awakening" on any significant scale. However, as Demetrius Kapustin pointed out, the signs of this awakening – the greater reading of spiritual books, the greater discussion of canonical and historical questions in the MP – are not good indicators of real spiritual progress: "It is evident that the reading of Church books can bring a person great benefit. However, a necessary condition for this is love for the truth. The Jews also saw Christ, and spoke with Him, but they did not want humbly to receive the true teaching, and not only were they not saved, but also took part in the persecutions and destroyed their own souls. It is the same with many parishioners of the MP. On reading books on the contemporary Church situation, many of them come to the conclusion that sergianism and ecumenism are soul-destroying. However, these doubts of theirs are often drowned out by the affirmations of their false teachers, who dare to place themselves above the patristic tradition. Satisfying themselves with a false understanding of love (substituting adultery with heretics and law-breakers for love for God, which requires chastity and keeping the truth) and obedience (substituting following the teaching of false elders for obedience to God and the humble acceptance of the patristic teaching, and not recognizing their personal responsibility for their own Church state), they often take part in the persecutions and slander against the True Orthodox. In a word, even such good works as the veneration of the Royal Martyrs are often expressed in a distorted form (by, for example, mixing it with Stalinism, as with the 'fighter from within' Dushenov)". Kapustin then makes the important point that "an enormous number of people... have not come to Orthodoxy precisely because they have not seen true Christianity in the MP (alas, in the consciousness of many people in Russia the Orthodox Church is associated with the MP). In my opinion, the MP rather hinders than assists the spiritual awakening of the Russian people (if we can talk at all about any awakening in the present exceptionally wretched spiritual condition of Russia)."<sup>440</sup>

---

<sup>439</sup> "Obraschenie kurskogo dukhovenstva k mitropolitu Vitaliu" (Address of the Kursk Clergy to Metropolitan Vitaly), *Otkliki*, op. cit., part 3, p. 79.

<sup>440</sup> Kapustin, "Raz'iasnenia Episkopa usilili somnenia" (The Explanations of the Bishop have increased Doubts), *Otkliki*, op. cit., part 3, p. 66. Kapustin was actually commenting on Bishop Eutyches' report to the Council. However, since the Council in its epistle accepted Eutyches' report almost *in toto*, and repeated many of his points, the remarks on the bishop's report apply equally to the conciliar epistle.



Secondly, ROCOR's epistle welcomed the MP's glorification of the New Martyrs, since "the turning of the whole Russian people in prayer to all the holy New Martyrs of Russia and especially the Royal new martyrs... had become possible now thanks to the recognition of their holiness by the Hierarchical Council of the Moscow Patriarchate". As if the Russian people had not already been praying to the Holy New Martyrs in front of icons made in ROCOR for the past twenty years!

Moreover, as Protopriests Constantine Fyodorov and Benjamin Zhukov wrote, "the possibility of turning in prayer to the Russian New Martyrs was opened to the people *not by the Moscow Patriarchate (as is written in our Hierarchical Council's Epistle), but by the martyric exploit of these saints themselves, who were glorified by our Church in 1981*. The prayer of the Russian people to these saints never ceased from the very first day of their martyric exploit, but *was strengthened and spread precisely by the canonization of the Church Abroad.*"<sup>441</sup>

Thirdly: "We are encouraged by the acceptance of the new social conception by this council, which in essence *blots out* the 'Declaration' of Metropolitan Sergius in 1927".<sup>442</sup> And yet in the MP's "social conception" Sergius' declaration was not even mentioned, let alone repented of. In any case, how could one vague phrase about the necessity of the Church disobeying the State in certain exceptional cases (which was contradicted on the same page, as we have seen) *blot out* a Declaration that caused the greatest schism in Orthodox Church history since 1054 and incalculable sufferings and death?! Two years later, as we have seen, in July, 2002, the Synod of the MP, far from "blotting out" the declaration, said that Sergius' relationship to the Soviet authorities was "not blameworthy", so not only has the MP *not* repented for sergianism, but it has continued to *justify* it, contradicting the position of the Catacomb new martyrs whom it has just glorified and who gave their lives because of their opposition to sergianism.

The epistle, which was signed by all the bishops except Barnabas, obliquely recognised this fact when it later declared: "We have not seen a just evaluation by the Moscow Patriarchate of the anti-ecclesiastical actions of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and his Synod and their successors". If so, then how can we talk about Sergius' Declaration being *blotted out*!?

The third epistle, addressed to the Old Ritualists without distinguishing between the Popovtsi and Bespopovtsi, was similarly ecumenist in tone,

---

<sup>441</sup> Fyodorov, Zhukov, "Ispovedanie iskonnoj pozitsii RPTsZ" (The Confession of the Age-Old Position of the ROCOR), *Otkliki*, op. cit., part 3, p. 46.

<sup>442</sup> Again, it was Bishop Eutyches' report that played the vital role here: "We simply no longer notice it, one phrase from the Social Doctrine is sufficient for us" (A. Soldatov, "Sergij premudrij nam put' ozaril" (Sergius the Wise has Illumined our Path), *Vertograd*, N 461, 21 May, 2004, p. 4).

beginning with the words: "To the Believing children of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Homeland and in the diaspora, who hold to the old rite, the Council of bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad sends greetings! Beloved brothers and sisters in our holy Orthodox faith: may the grace and peace of the Man-loving Saviour be with you to the ages!"

It was one thing to remove the bans on the old rites, as ROCOR had done in its Council in 1974: it was quite another to recognise the schismatics as Orthodox. And in such terms! For later in the epistle ROCOR compares the persecutions of the Old Ritualists to the persecutions of St. John Chrysostom, and begs forgiveness of the Old Ritualists as the Emperor Theodosius the Younger had begged it of the holy hierarch! But, as Bishop Gregory Grabbe pointed out after the 1974 Council, the sins of the Russian State in persecuting the Old Ritualists in the 17<sup>th</sup> century should not all be laid on the Church of the time, which primarily condemned the Old Ritualists not for their adherence to the old rites (which even Patriarch Nikon recognised to be salvific), but for their disobedience to the Church. To lay all the blame for the schism, not on the Old Ritualists but on the Orthodox, even after the Old Ritualists had proudly refused to take advantage of the many major concessions made by the Orthodox (for example, the edinoverie) while stubbornly continuing to call the Orthodox themselves schismatics, was to invert the truth and logically led to the conclusion that the Orthodox Church was not the True Church!

As clergy of the Kursk diocese pointed out: "The conciliar epistle to the Old Ritualists, in our opinion, is not only an extremely humiliating document for the Orthodox Church, but also contains signs of a heterodox ecclesiology. Effectively equating the Old Ritualists with the confessors of Orthodoxy, the Hierarchical Council, first, leaves them with their convictions, thereby blocking the path to repentance, and secondly, either teaches that outside the Orthodox Church there can exist true confession, or considers that the Church can be divided into parts which for centuries have not had any eucharistic communion between themselves. Both in form and in spirit the epistle in question represents a complete break with the patristic tradition of the Orthodox Church.... It seems that all that remains to be added is the request: 'We humbly beseech you to receive us into your communion and be united to the Holy Church.'<sup>443</sup>

The feelings of the protestors was summed up by Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky and Roman Vershillo, who said that a "revolution" had taken place, and that "if we are to express the meaning of the coup shortly, then there took place, first, a moral disarmament, and secondly, the self-abolition of ROCOR as a separate part of the Russian Local Church... Alas, [it] is composed in such a

---

<sup>443</sup> "Obraschenie kurskogo dukhovenstva k mitropolitu Vitaliu" (Address of the Kursk Clergy to Metropolitan Vitaly), *Otkliki*, op. cit., part 3, pp. 81-82, 76.

way that it is not actually clear who has really fallen into schism from the Church: we or our errant Old Ritualist brothers!”<sup>444</sup>

For ROCOR the writing was now on the wall. The October, 2000 Council constituted a clear break with the traditional attitude towards the MP and World Orthodoxy adopted by Metropolitans Anthony, Anastasy and Philaret. Only a clear renunciation of that clear break could keep the children of ROCOR within the Church and Faith of their fathers...

The October, 2000 Council was dubbed “the second October revolution” by its critics. And soon, in imitation of the MP’s own behaviour, suspensions and bans were being placed on the dissidents without any pretence of correct canonical procedure. Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan banned Hieromonk Paisius of Richmond Hill, New York; Bishop Michael of Toronto banned Hieromonk Vladimir of Mansonville, Canada; Bishop Agathangelus of the Crimea banned Priest Nicholas Furtatenko of Kiev; and Bishop Eutyches of Siberia banned three priests from St. Petersburg and two from Omsk. It was clear that opposition to the false council of 2000 was increasing both inside and outside Russia. The question was: would this opposition finally break with ROCOR and, together with those who had already broken with ROCOR or been unlawfully expelled from it, form a coherent and united force capable of regenerating the Russian Church?

## II. The Fall of the New York Synod

“On November 21 / December 4, 2000,” writes Vitaly Shumilo, “Metropolitan Vitaly, in reply to the numerous appeals, published his ‘Epistle to the Clergy and Flock’ in which he gave his evaluation of the Moscow Patriarchate and its Sobor of 2000, in particular with regard to the canonization in the MP of the New Martyrs and the Royal Family. ‘The Moscow Patriarchate has decided to carry out a political capitulation and to perform its glorification with one aim only: to pacify the voice of its believers and thereby gain some continued existence for itself.’ In his Epistle Vladyka Metropolitan also gives a critical evaluation of the decree accepted by the ROCOR Sobor concerning the creation of a Reconciliatory commission for unity with the MP and recalled how and with what aim Stalin created the contemporary ‘Moscow Patriarchate’. And here he speaks about the Catacomb Church, which did not enter upon the path of serving the God-fighting authorities, and about the Soviet church, which submitted to the authorities: ‘The silent response to this on the part of the believers in Russia was that they began to pray in their homes, and in every such flat a house church with an iconostasis was created... This kind of church exists to this day.’ In his Epistle the First-Hierarch affirmed that ‘our Church, which already now for 80 years has gone along the straight path of Christ, will not

---

<sup>444</sup> Krasovitsky, Vershillo, “Esche raz o sergianstve” (Once More about Sergianism), *Otkliki*, op. cit., part 2, p. 52.

deviate into any dubious holes', and 'the fact that I have signed this Epistle [the conciliar decision of 2000 –author's comment] by no means signifies that I agree with every point in it, and I know that there are other hierarchs who thought the same as I'. At the end of the Epistle Metropolitan Vitaly once more declared: 'And so know, faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, that our Church has not changed its path, and we also, if we wish to be saved, must go along this path', and he called on them to remain 'faithful to the Lord and His Church'."<sup>445</sup>

The most organized resistance outside Russia came from the West European diocese. The clergy there were unhappy with the appointment of the pro-MP Bishop Ambrose (Cantacuzène) as head of the diocese to replace the anti-MP Archbishop Seraphim, who was retiring. Moreover, on October 17 a letter to the Council of Bishops signed by Bishop Barnabas, 7 archpriests, 7 priests, the Abbess of the Lesna convent and other lower clergy protested against the plans, announced in a letter by two Geneva priests, to transfer the Geneva parish of the Elevation of the Cross to the MP in exchange for "stavropegial" status and administrative and financial independence.

The role of Bishop Ambrose of Geneva in this affair was not immediately obvious.<sup>446</sup> Although he had been conducting negotiations with the MP for the last five years, he appeared at first to distance himself from the two priests. However, on October 27 he was elevated to the rank of diocesan bishop of the Western Europe diocese, and immediately, at a parish meeting, said that he was very happy with the parish council's decision to join the MP...<sup>447</sup>

There were stirrings in Russia also. On January 21 / February 2, 2001, Bishop Benjamin (Rusalenko) of the Kuban and Black Sea made the first open declaration by a bishop withdrawing his signature from the unorthodox

---

<sup>445</sup> Shumilo, "Apostasia v Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkvi" (Apostasy in the Russian Church Abroad), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=1032>.

<sup>446</sup> Several years before, Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles had written to Metropolitan Vitaly when the consecration of Bishop Ambrose was first mooted: "I am worried by the words of Vl. Anthony [of Geneva]: 'Both candidates are my faithful friends, they have the same opinions as I.' We all remember the words of Vl. Anthony on Russia, we know his attitude towards the ecumenists of the Serbian church and to the Paris archiepiscopate. God forbid that his candidates, especially the younger one, should be of the same opinion as him in this. I would like to meet them personally, so as to be able to take part in a discussion of their consecration. Since there is no time for this, and the consecration is already decided, let my reply remain as a reminder concerning those irreparable consequences which have already taken place more than once in our Church as the result of hasty and uncanonical consecrations.

"... Concerning Fr. Peter Cantacuzène, whom I don't know at all, I have negative information from the clergy in France, to the effect that he is not firm in all things.

"In conclusion I very fervently and ardently ask you not to hurry with the ordination of Fr. P. Cantacuzène. There is a great risk of our receiving an unwanted hierarchical voice, and we are obliged to foresee this." (undated letter, original in the archive of Archbishop Anthony (Orlov) of San Francisco).

<sup>447</sup> *Church News*, November, 2000, vol. 12, N 8 (90), pp. 8-10.

decisions of the Council of the year 2000. In June he was followed by Archbishop Lazarus. Now all the Russian bishops except Bishop Eutyches of Ishim and Siberia<sup>448</sup> were on the side of the protesters.

On February 6-8 there took place a meeting of the Hierarchical Synod in New York under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly that confirmed all the decisions of the Council. "We are very upset," said the Synod, "by the disturbances that have taken hold of some parts of our church organism. In connection with this we affirm that we – all the members of the Hierarchical Synod, headed by the president, his Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, - unanimously stand by the decisions and declarations accepted at the Hierarchical Council and we cannot agree with the attempt to introduce a spirit of doubt and disagreement into our midst."

In response to this, on February 24 / March 9 Bishop Benjamin and the clergy of the Kuban and Black Sea diocese wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly and the Synod, saying: "We insistently ask you to convene a new Council with the participation of clergy, monastics and laity. Because by your decisions you have introduced strong dismay and disturbance into the whole of our Church. We are expecting a positive response to our Address from the next meeting of the Hierarchical Synod. But if our voice is not heeded by the Archpastors, then we shall be forced, in accordance with the holy canons that forbid joint prayer with heretics, to step on the path of decisive actions ('depart from evil and do good')... We have not lost hope that our Hierarchical Synod will review these decisions and by the conciliar mind of the Russian Church Abroad will correct the errors that have been made."

Meanwhile, the clergy of the West European diocese were continuing to refuse to accept Bishop Ambrose's authority. Fr. Nicholas Semeonov of Brussels and Fr. Constantine Fyodorov of the Lesna convent in France were suspended. On February 28, 2001, Bishop Barnabas withdrew his signature from the October Council's letter to the Serbian patriarch. The next day Bishop Ambrose "released the clergy and the flock of the French vicariate [of

---

<sup>448</sup> Moreover, just to keep him on side, Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev) called him in March, 2004 and gave him an ultimatum: either become a vicar of Patriarch Alexis II, or leave Russia..." (Konstantin Preobrazhensky, "Ecumenism and Intelligence"). In the same year, according to Roman Lunkin, Bishop Eutyches became a member of the commission for the unification of ROCOR and the MP, declaring that he had already for a long time been striving for unity with the MP. In a press interview he asserted that 70% of the clergy of ROCOR were ready to unite with the patriarchate even now, and that the very unification of the churches could become an event signifying the changes that had taken place in the MP and the shedding of its 'sovietism'. In the summer of 2004, after a meeting between Bishop Eutyches and Archbishop Demetrius (Kapalin) of Tobolsk and Tyumen arranged by the vice-governor of the Tyumen district, Sergius Smetaniuk, Archbishop Demetrius declared that there were no contradictions between the two branches of the Russian Orthodox Church ("Rossijskie zarubezhniki mezhdru dvukh ognij" (The Russians of the Church Abroad between two fires), <http://www.starlightsite.co.uk/keston/russia/articles/nov2005/01Kurochkin.html>).

Cannes] from submission to Bishop Barnabas".<sup>449</sup> Then, on April 24 the ROCOR Synod, on the basis of a report by the Protopriests George Larin and Stefan Pavlenko, suspended the French clergy for their refusal to commemorate Bishop Ambrose, and told them to meet Archbishop Laurus in Munich on May 2. This suspension was signed by Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Laurus, secretary of the Synod. The French clergy, meeting with Bishop Barnabas, unanimously rejected the suspensions as uncanonical, and did not go to the meeting in Munich. But on April 25, Bishop Barnabas was also placed under ban. These acts were signed by Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Laurus.<sup>450</sup>

None of the banned clergy was able to arrive at such short notice for the meeting on May 2. In their absence a broadened Hierarchical Synod confirmed the April decisions to ban Bishop Barnabas and his clergy.<sup>451</sup> On May 5 Bishop Barnabas and his clergy signed an Address in which they evaluated the activity of the Synod and Bishop Ambrose in the last few months. They pointed out that they had made several appeals to the Synod to review the ecumenist and pro-MP activity of Bishop Ambrose and to remove him from administering the diocese. In reply, instead of investigating the complaints and initiating an ecclesiastical trial, the Synod had banned the appellers "until repentance". Referring to Bishop Benjamin's Declaration ("the voice of Bishop Benjamin of the Black Sea and Kuban has sounded out in a confessing manner", they said), the West European clergy appealed to the like-minded clergy and flock in Russia and abroad to unite "and form a powerful opposition to the new course in our Church".

On May 6/19 another Address of the West European clergy appeared on the internet, in which their position was explained and bewilderment expressed with regard to the bans placed on them by the Synod. "The essence of the question is not in some crude and enigmatic disobedience to the hierarchy, but in the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Moscow Patriarchate. The question was clearly put at the Council of the year 2000, which established a Commission for the Unity of the Russian Church and turned to the Serbian 'Patriarch' with a request that he intercede on the path to this unity. The hierarchs deliberately ignore this question and cover it with a supposed violation of church discipline. The appointment of Bishop Ambrose as the ruling bishop, although he is a supporter of rapprochement with Moscow and in spite of all the warnings, has brought the diocese into

---

<sup>449</sup> *Church News*, March-April, 2001, vol. 13, N 2 (94), pp. 5-6.

<sup>450</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, May-June, 2001, N 3 (94), pp. 1-3.

<sup>451</sup> Fr. Luca (Michellin) argues that Bishop Barnabas was partly responsible for this tragedy in that, at the Council of 2000, when the appointment of a bishop to replace the retired Archbishop Seraphim of Brussels had been discussed, his own name had been put forward by Bishop Gabriel, but he had refused, saying that he had been ordained in 1982 solely in order to carry out a secret episcopal consecration for the Catacomb Church. As a result, Bishop Ambrose was appointed, while Bishop Barnabas remained in the rank of a vicar-bishop. Bishop Barnabas did not oppose Bishop Ambrose's appointment at that time.

complete disorder... In recognizing the Moscow Patriarchate as the genuine Russian Church, the hierarchs have condemned themselves as schismatics, falling under the Moscow Patriarchate's condemnation of the Church Abroad." At the end of the Address the banned clergy declared that this kind of action on the part of the members of the Synod "has no real ecclesiastical significance, and all their decisions bear only a party character". The crisis in the West European diocese had reached the point where formal synodical decrees and bans were no longer able to resolve it.

But perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the whole affair was the fact that Metropolitan Vitaly had signed these bans...

On May 22 / June 4 Archbishop Lazarus withdrew his signature from the decisions of the Council of 2000. In his Address (which he had begun in January, 2001, but had been prevented from completing because of illness) he, following Bishop Benjamin, called for an extraordinary Council of ROCOR to review several points in that Council's documents. And he went on: "In no way am I thinking, and never have thought, of leaving ROCOR and causing a schism, but, on the contrary, by this step of mine I guard myself and the flock entrusted to me by the Holy Church from deviating from the only true path of confession along which ROCOR and RTOC (as two parts of one Russian Church) have unwaveringly gone since the very moment of their origin."

Archbishop Lazarus also warned against premature breaking with the Synod. He was probably thinking of the action of the Paris Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov, who in the previous month of May, had attempted to have Archimandrite Sergius (Kindyakov) consecrated and had unsuccessfully tried to draw Lazarus into his plot.<sup>452</sup> But he did succeed in enrolling Bishop Barnabas, who travelled with the aim of consecrating Sergius to Mansonville in Canada, but was deterred from carrying out the consecration by Metropolitan Vitaly. However, Bishop Barnabas and Fr. Benjamin went on to register a new church group under the name of "The Russian Orthodox Church in Exile" in the Paris prefecture as a "public, non-commercial corporation." It appeared that already these two were plotting a church coup, with the replacement of Vitaly by Barnabas as metropolitan and with Zhukov as the real controller behind the scenes...

At this point, Metropolitan Vitaly, seeing the chaos being created in the Church, began to step back from the course he had undertaken together with the other hierarchs. In an epistle dated June 7/20, he rescinded the bans on Bishop Barnabas and the French clergy. He had the right to do this as a *temporary* measure, in accordance with article 38 of the ROCOR *Statute*, pending the convening of a new Sobor that alone could make a final decision. Then, in an encyclical dated June 9/22, which he ordered to be read from the ambon of all the churches, the metropolitan subjected many positions

---

<sup>452</sup> V. Zhukov, *Mysli o Rossii*, October, 2005.

adopted in the recent Sobor to just criticism, and called for the convocation of a new Sobor. Although the metropolitan did not personally repent of his part in the creation of this chaos (as recently as the Synodal session on February 8 he had upheld the decisions of the October 2000 Council<sup>453</sup>), his willingness to review the disastrous decisions of the October Sober was very welcome. On June 25 / July 8 Archbishop Lazarus expressed his “support and profound gratitude” for the encyclical.

However, the encyclical “was forbidden to be read on the orders of Bishop Gabriel”<sup>454</sup> of Manhattan, the deputy secretary of the Synod, who declared that the metropolitan had probably not composed the encyclical but had been pressured into signing it by unknown persons (the first of several such accusations in the months to come). Bishop Gabriel’s claim was supported in letters by Archbishop Mark and Bishop Ambrose. But then Bishop Barnabas weighed in on the side of the metropolitan, pointing out that the encyclical had been thrashed out in the course of three days of talks in Mansonville and expressed the freely expressed opinions of the metropolitan himself.<sup>455</sup>

On July 10, a critical session of the Hierarchical Synod was held. The event turned into a very crude and rude attempt to force the metropolitan to retire – only two or three days before the fiftieth anniversary of his service as a bishop. The metropolitan said that he could retire only as the result of the decision of a Sobor; but the other bishops said that that was not necessary. The metropolitan then closed the session, declaring that he had nothing in common with the other bishops, and that he would see them at the Sobor.

However, two documents dated the same day and signed, as it would seem, by Metropolitan Vitaly as well as by the other ten bishops, declared that the metropolitan had submitted a petition that he be allowed to retire “in view of age and illness” (he was 92), that his petition had been accepted with understanding, that Archbishop Laurus was appointed deputy of the first hierarch “with all proxy powers” (protocol N 9) until a Sobor could be convened, and that a Sobor to elect a new metropolitan would be convened in October!<sup>456</sup> The decision was taken that “any official documents coming from the Synod without the signature of the deputy of the First-Hierarchy, Archbishop Laurus, are invalid (article three of the Act). And it was also decreed that a Hierarchical Sobor should be convened in October to elect a new First-Hierarchy (article 4). Archbishop Laurus was appointed Deputy of the First-Hierarchy, and his name was to be commemorated in all the parishes after the name of the First-Hierarchy...

---

<sup>453</sup> “Zaiavlenie Arkhierejskogo Sinoda Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi za Granitsej”, <http://www.russia-talk.com/otkliki/ot-45.htm>.

<sup>454</sup> Dr. Olga Ackerly, “High Treason in ROCOR: The Rapprochement with Moscow”, [http://stnicholascandles.com/High\\_Treason.htm](http://stnicholascandles.com/High_Treason.htm).

<sup>455</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, June- July, 2001, N 4 (95), pp. 1-4.

<sup>456</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, June- July, 2001, N 4 (95), p. 6.



Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin did not submit to these decrees, and continued to commemorate Metropolitan Vitaly without commemorating Archbishop Laurus.

On July 12 a triumphant liturgy and moleben was celebrated in honour of Metropolitan Vitaly's jubilee, after which a number of hypocritical speeches praising the metropolitan were uttered by hierarchs who had been treating him with such disrespect only two days before.<sup>457</sup>

On July 13 the Synod declared, in an attempt to assuage the fears of Metropolitan Vitaly's supporters: "None of the hierarchs of ROCOR is pushing towards a unification with the MP. There is no pro-MP faction amongst us." The falseness of these words was already evident, but would be demonstrated even more clearly in the coming years...

"Shortly after the forced removal of Metropolitan Vitaly," writes Professor Olga Ackerly, "... the MP began to voice its endorsement: 'We welcome the fact that the more healthy forces in the Church Abroad have predominated and are now for all practical purposes in charge of it.'"<sup>458</sup>

On September 4-5, a Conference of the Hierarchs, Clergy and Laity of the Russian Parishes of ROCOR took place in Voronezh under the presidency of Archbishop Laurus, and with the participation of Bishops Benjamin, Agathangelus and Eutyches. At this meeting the Kursk and Belgorod clergy declared their break of communion with the New York Synod and addressed their bishops – Lazarus, Benjamin and Agathangelus – with a suggestion that they appeal to Metropolitan Vitaly and Bishop Barnabas that they unite with them on the basis of the pre-2000 dogmatical and canonical position of ROCOR. Bishop Agathangelus reacted by demanding that the Kursk clergy renounce their break of communion with the New York Synod. Otherwise, he would not sign any proposed documents. And he showed the clergy the door... Archbishop Lazarus did not support his colleague's hardline attitude to the Kursk clergy, but agreed with him about not breaking with the Lavrites. Bishop Benjamin adopted a neutral position. Although the majority of the Conference agreed with the Kursk clergy, they now tried to persuade them, for the sake of "the good of the Church" to withdraw their words about a break of communion with the New York Synod. Fr. Valery Rozhnov said that the Synod had fallen under their own anathema. Archbishop Lazarus retorted that nobody had anathematized them. When the Kursk clergy refused to back down, Bishop Agathangelus said that he was not in communion with them. And so they left the meeting... Finally, the Conference accepted an Address to the forthcoming Sobor in which support was expressed for Metropolitan Vitaly's encyclical and for the banned Bishop Barnabas and the West

---

<sup>457</sup> "Trusost', izmena i obman", <http://www.russia-talk.com/otkliki/ot-113.htm>.

<sup>458</sup> Ackerly, *op. cit.*

European clergy, while the practice of this kind of ban was condemned. Then, addressing Metropolitan Vitaly personally, the Conference besought him not to abandon his post of First-Hierarchy.

On reading this Address in New York, Metropolitan Vitaly raised his right hand and said: "*There is the True Church. Here everything is finished...*"<sup>459</sup> And on September 8/21 Bishop Barnabas and the West European clergy (including Fr. Benjamin Zhukov) expressed their gratitude to the Russian hierarchs and their complete support for their position.

Bishop Agathangelus signed all the decrees and addresses of the Voronezh Conference, and was entrusted with representing its views to the Sobor in New York. He assured the participants that he would not vote for the new course of rapprochement with the MP, and that if Metropolitan Vitaly refused to take part in the Sobor and left the hall, he would follow him. However, having arrived in New York, he changed course and joined the uniates. And then, on returning to Russia, he raised a persecution against Archbishop Lazarus and his colleagues. He denounced them to the civil authorities, tried to have their registration rescinded and their churches taken from them. He even tried to seize the church of St. John of Kronstadt in Odessa that belonged to Archbishop Lazarus...

At the first session of the Sobor in New York, on October 10/23, Archbishop Laurus was elected metropolitan – a decision welcomed by "Patriarch" Alexis of Moscow. Metropolitan Vitaly was present at this session, but only in order to hand in the following declaration, dated October 5/18, after which he left the hall:

"Recognizing the depth of the sinful fall of certain members of the Hierarchical Council of our Church in their intensive, but not yet expressed desire to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate, I, with full responsibility before God, the Russian people and my conscience, consider it my archpastoral duty to declare that the coming Hierarchical Sobor, which is due to open on October 23, 2001 cannot be called anything other than a collection of irresponsibles.

"This Sobor undoubtedly intends to discuss questions relating to a possible union with the false-church of the Moscow Patriarchate. The other day I received a 'Fraternal Epistle' from Patriarch Alexis II, which, to my profound sorrow, elicited a joyful reaction from many clerics of our Church. They even sent a triumphant address to the Sobor, asking the Sobor to react positively to this epistle of the patriarch. Their address was signed by 18-odd clerics of our Church. But how many more are there who do not dare to express themselves openly? Seeing no other way out of the situation that has been created, and

---

<sup>459</sup> Witness of Hieromonk Anthony (Rudej).

not wishing to bear responsibility for the final destruction of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad that has been entrusted to my care, I declare:

“I consider myself the lawful heir of all the preceding metropolitans of our Holy Church Abroad: first Metropolitan Anthony, then Metropolitan Anastasius, and finally Metropolitan Philaret. I am the fourth Metropolitan of our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and until the most recent time, I have continued, with the help of God, to lead this ship on the straight path amidst the threatening waves of the sea of this world, avoiding underwater rocks, sudden storms and deep pits that suck ships to the bottom of the sea. Unfortunately, a fateful time has come, when I have understood and appreciated the sad fact that between me and the other hierarchs of our Synod there is no longer oneness of mind and soul. I said this at the last Synod, when after the first session I, distressed and fully conscious of my isolation among the other hierarchs, left the gathering. On this basis and only on this basis, I agreed to retire and will be considered the Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in retirement. In this Church I was born, was baptized and will die when the time comes.

“I wish to declare for all to hear that as First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, I completely reject and condemn any rapprochement whatsoever and union in the future with the false-church, the Moscow Patriarchate.

“I also wish to declare that I remove my signature from the following documents signed by me:

“1. My signature on the address to the Serbian Patriarch Paul.

“2. My signature on the agreement to form a commission for the establishment of negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate...”

On the same day Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin again addressed the Sobor and Metropolitan Vitaly personally. They called on the Sobor to review the unacceptable documents accepted in the previous Sobor, and asked the metropolitan not to retire, saying that they recognized only him as First-Hierarch. They said that they were not able, for objective reasons, to be in New York, but were ready to take part in the work of the Sobor by telephone – on condition, however, that all the bishops withdrew their signatures from the documents of the Council of 2000.

On October 11/24, Bishop Barnabas also wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly expressing his support. Before that he and Protodeacon Herman Ivanov-Trinadtsaty had phoned him, appealing to him not to retire. On the same day Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin once again wrote to the metropolitan, asking him to review his decision to retire. Archbishop Lazarus

even repeated the request in a phone call to Mansonville. "No," replied the metropolitan firmly, "I am a metropolitan in retirement." "How then is it to be with us now in Russia?" asked the archbishop. "Place your hope on God. God will bless", replied the metropolitan...

On receiving this reply, Archbishop Lazarus decreed that for the time being only the name of the ruling bishop should be commemorated in his cathedral church of St. John of Kronstadt in Odessa. With the retirement of the metropolitan, the ruling organ of the Russian Church now became the Hierarchical Conference of Russian Bishops, first created with the blessing of the ROCOR Hierarchical Council in 1994 with Archbishop Lazarus at its head.

On October 11/24, having discussed the declarations of the Russian bishops, the Sobor in New York elected Archbishop Laurus as metropolitan by a majority of votes and confirmed its adherence to the decisions of the robber council of 2000.

On October 12/25, Metropolitan Vitaly came into the hall, congratulated "the new First-Hierarch Metropolitan Laurus" and said "that he was going into retirement and is handing over the reins of the Church's administration". From what is written in the Protocol, the conversation was friendly. The metropolitan congratulated Archbishop Laurus and wished him "to guide the ship of the Church in the same way that it had always been guided, on the straight path of True Orthodoxy". On his part, Archbishop Laurus "in the name of the Sobor thanked Metropolitan Vitaly for his labours for the good of the Church", and "asked him for his help in bringing order to Church life". The metropolitan once again emphasized that "by reason of his health and in view of his advanced age he could no longer administer the Church. He had never been ambitious. He truly needed rest." The session continued without the metropolitan, and they discussed the participation of Vladyka Vitaly at the enthronement of Archbishop Laurus and the provision of a pension for him in his retirement.

The Sobor wanted Metropolitan Vitaly to hand over all his property in Canada to the Synod. To this end, fearing the interference of his secretary, Liudmilla Rosnianskaia, it was decreed, already on October 11/24, to remove her immediately from the Synodal house, "bringing to an end her position as a servant of the Hierarchical Synod". Then, on the evening of the same or the following day (that is, on October 11/24 or 12/25), she was unceremoniously thrown out of the Synodal building, and the contents of her handbag, containing the metropolitan's Canadian passport, medication and \$20,000, were stolen. The next day, the metropolitan himself fled, first to the house of Fr. Vladimir Shishkov (where Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal happened to be staying), and then to Canada. The ROCOR hierarchs gave an order to detain him at the border, but he successfully arrived at his Transfiguration Skete in Mansonville. The next day ROCOR sued Fr. Vladimir for assisting in

the supposed kidnapping of the metropolitan, and Rosnianskaia was accused of kidnapping him, of giving him drugs to destroy his memory, and of exploiting his senility to her advantage.

As a result of these events, through the greed of the Synodal hierarchs, Metropolitan Vitaly was prevented from taking part in the enthronement of Archbishop Laurus and of praying together with the uniate hierarchs. On the day after his departure for Canada there was an earthquake in New York... And on the very night that Metropolitan Laurus arrived in the Holy Trinity monastery in Jordanville, a fire broke out in the monastery...<sup>460</sup> The fire was stopped at the seminary building in which was housed the cell icon of the Iveron Mother of God that had belonged to Metropolitan Philaret.<sup>461</sup>

On November 13, President Putin met Bishop Gabriel, secretary of the ROCOR (L) Synod, and invited him and Metropolitan Laurus to visit Moscow. He must have agreed this invitation with Patriarch Alexis. So with the blessing of the KGB leaders of both Church and State, the real negotiations on union, a process that was called “structuring”<sup>462</sup> by its supporters, could begin.

### III. The Creation of the Mansonville Synod

Meanwhile, in Mansonville Hieromonk Vladimir (Tselishev), an ally of Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, finally convinced Metropolitan Vitaly to come out of retirement. According to the witness of Fr. Vladimir, the argument that prevailed with him was the support of the Russian bishops and the question: “Vladyka, to whom are you leaving the Russian bishops and flock?”

This represented a striking volte face on the part of Hieromonk Vladimir. Only a few months before he had dismissed the metropolitan, saying: “there is no more metropolitan” (letter of November, 2000). He said that the metropolitan was no longer able to administer the Church because he was “deprived of orientation and memory” and remained in “an unhealthy state of mind and reasoning (letter of May, 2001). He “completely depended” on his secretary, L.D. Rosnianskaia, who had control of his signature, his writing paper and his seal. “One should have no illusions about this,” he wrote (letter of July, 2001). Such inconsistency raised suspicions about Fr. Vladimir’s real motivation – suspicions that were to be confirmed quite soon...

Indeed, if the main body of the bishops led by Archbishops Laurus and Mark were preparing a “revolution on the left” against the authority of the

---

<sup>460</sup> *Pravoslavnaia Rus'*, N 1692. December 1/14, 2001.

<sup>461</sup> Shumilo, *op. cit.*

<sup>462</sup> See the prayer appointed in all churches of ROCOR during the Divine Liturgy: “O All-Good Master, watch over Thy flock and all the children of the Russian Church Abroad, that we may bring about the *structuring* of our Church in a manner well-pleasing to Thee.”

metropolitan, there is strong evidence that a “revolution on the right” was also being prepared. The real leader of these rightist revolutionaries was the Paris Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov. In May, 2001, he asked the metropolitan to bless Bishop Barnabas of Cannes (his creature at the time) to consecrate Archimandrite Sergius (Kindiakov) to the episcopate. The metropolitan refused, and Zhukov, annoyed, then tried to persuade Archbishop Lazarus of Tambov and Odessa to carry out the consecration in secret, suggesting that he would become “metropolitan” and “first-hierarchy”. Lazarus refused, thereby earning the hatred of Zhukov – with dire consequences for the Church.<sup>463</sup>

Persuaded by “rightist revolutionaries” such as Tselishev and Zhukov, on October 14/27, the metropolitan issued an “Extraordinary Declaration” on the internet: “In view of the unwillingness on the part of the majority of the bishop to reconcile and pacify the unheard-of disturbance among our clergy and flock, and also taking into account the requests of some of the bishops and many of the children of the Church Abroad, I with all responsibility declare that, in accordance with paragraph 34 of the Statute on the ROCOR, I remove my signature concerning my voluntary retirement and handing over of my powers to Archbishop Laurus. My name must be commemorated as before at services in all the churches of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In case of unforeseen circumstances, Bishop Barnabas of Cannes is entrusted with temporarily bearing the powers of Deputy of the First-Hierarchy of ROCOR until the election of a new First-Hierarchy of the Church Abroad by hierarchs who have remained faithful to the Orthodox faith.”<sup>464</sup>

This news was greeted with joy, but also with some perplexity, by the opponents of union with the MP. After all, only three days before the metropolitan had refused to revoke his decision to retire even after several earnest entreaties from hierarchs, clergy and laity both within and outside Russia. Moreover, there was considerable concern whether the metropolitan had the right to come out of retirement and resume the leadership of the Church without the decision of a Sobor of bishops.<sup>465</sup> Paragraph 34 of the *Statute* on ROCOR did not provide him with that authority.

---

<sup>463</sup> “Ocherednie chistki i raskol v ‘mansonvill’skom sinode vikariiev’ (Yet more purges and a schism in the ‘Mansonville Synod of Vicars’), [http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print\\_page&pid=930](http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=930).

<sup>464</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, October, 2001, N 7 (99), pp. 2-4.

<sup>465</sup> As A. Shatilova wrote: “The Epistle of the Third Ecumenical Council on the matter of Metropolitan Eustathius of Pamphylia is amazingly analogous to Metropolitan Vitaly’s retirement, which was truly elicited by violence in July. However, his giving a second declaration to the Sobor in October this year was, according to all the signs, voluntary. In the Epistle on the matter of Metropolitan Eustathius it says that he ‘was troubled by certain persons and found himself faced with unforeseen circumstances. Then, later on, because of too much inertia, he refused to face the troubles which assailed him, even when he was able to turn aside the slanders of those who were fighting against him. He thus submitted his written resignation – we do not know how.’ The Council goes on to declare that ‘since he showed himself, in this case, negligent rather by inertia than by laziness or indolence,’ it considered that it would be possible ‘to forgive the old man’, - but, nevertheless, the Epistle of

The only justification that the metropolitan could give for his action was the fact that he had been coerced to retire in July. As he himself said: "I hereby declare that, at that time [July 2001] I was coerced by violence to put my signature on documents prepared and written by the Synod... I have been the object of outrages and of high and repeated psychological pressures from the bishops. These tortures have exhausted me." That Metropolitan Vitaly had indeed been coerced was witnessed by two participants in the July meeting, Archimandrite Sergius (Kindiakov) and Priest Anthony (Orlov).<sup>466</sup> As against this, however, is the fact that by October the metropolitan appears to have been completely reconciled with his retirement, refused to withdraw it when asked to on many occasions, and voluntarily congratulated Archbishop Laurus on his election as the new metropolitan, reaffirming that he was retiring because of his health and old age and because he "truly needed rest".

"Here it is appropriate to note a similar precedent," writes Vitaly Shumilo: "it was for precisely this reason that the pre-revolutionary Russian Church did not recognize the canonicity of the so-called Belokrinitskaya Old Ritualist hierarchy, which traced its origins to Metropolitan Ambrose of Bosnia and Sarajevo, who was in retirement. The Old Ritualists' references to the fact that Metropolitan Ambrose had been sent into retirement not in accordance with his will, but on the demand and under the pressure of the Turkish government, and that the metropolitan did not recognize the decision of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate – were not accepted by the Holy Synod.

"The fact that Vladyka Vitaly was in the situation of a bishop in retirement is confirmed by consideration of what rights he actually enjoyed in the 'Mansonville Synod of Vicar-Bishops'. With the seizure of power in Mansonville by Protopriest B. Zhukov, Hieromonk V. Tselishev and Priest N.

---

the Third Ecumenical Council orders that the enthronement of Bishop Theodore instead of the retired Metropolitan Eustathius should be recognized as lawful. The Council clearly and precisely explained the new position of the retired bishop: '...Without any questioning, he should have the name, honor and communion of the episcopate without, however, performing any ordinations or taking over a church and officiating in it at his own will. Let him celebrate only if a brother and bishop invites him or allows him according to his disposition and love in Christ.'...

"In his extraordinary declaration of October 14/27, 2001, Metropolitan Vitaly removed his 'signature to my voluntary retirement and transfer of my rights to Archbishop Laurus'. How easy it has now become to 'remove (one's) signature' after a day or even a year! Until now, people who renounce their word, and still more their signatures, have lost all respect among those around them. However, in our age it is possible (without offering repentance for one's blunder or lack of civil courage) not only with impunity to renounce one's words and even signature, but even to become for some 'the heroes of the day'!" (*Tserkovnie Novosti*, November, 2001, N 8 (100), pp. 2-3).

<sup>466</sup> Their testimony, dated July 23, 2001, is cited in English by John Chaplain, "[paradosis] When Did Metropolitan Vitaly Retire? – (Lie not against the truth – James 3.14)", [orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com), May 16, 2005.

Orlov, Metropolitan Vitaly was de facto retired for the second time (the first time was by the plotters from New York headed by Archbishop Laurus and Archbishop Mark): all the parishes in Canada were removed from the direct administration of Vladyka Vitaly as the ruling Bishop of Montreal and Canada and transferred to the administration of the vicars, who proclaimed themselves to be 'ruling'. From this time and until his blessed death, Metropolitan Vitaly had not one single parish under his administration in Canada. From a canonical point of view, this was a possible situation for a hierarch only if he was in retirement. The remarks that the Metropolitan was weak and unable to administer the parishes are not honest. If the Metropolitan was not able to administer his parishes, was he able to administer the Church? It is clear that the people who kept the Metropolitan in captivity were inconsistent – not to say, cunning."<sup>467</sup>

There was a similar canonical problem with regard to the metropolitan's appointment of Bishop Barnabas as his deputy. Barnabas was under a ban signed by the metropolitan himself. That ban could be removed only by a Sobor of bishops. Therefore the Metropolitan's decision to appoint him as his deputy without the authority of a Sobor, and later to allow him to ordain bishops and be raised to the rank of archbishop, was uncanonical.

The only way in which what we shall now call ROCOR (V) could correct these canonical deficiencies was to turn to the Russian hierarchs Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin in order to convene a canonical Sobor. For they were in fact the only ruling bishops opposed to the New York synod who did not need a Council of bishops to reinstate them as fully functioning bishops. These bishops were very eager to help in this way. On October 27, the very day of his "Extraordinary Declaration", they had declared their loyalty to Metropolitan Vitaly.<sup>468</sup> And on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> they "made their declaration of loyalty to Metropolitan Vitaly by telephone. This phone call was received by Bishop (then Hieromonk) Vladimir in Mansonville in the presence of Protopriest Spyridon Schneider and Priest Andrew Kencis. When Bishop Vladimir finished his phone call with Archbishop Lazarus he enthusiastically proclaimed: 'Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin are with us, they are commemorating Metropolitan Vitaly.'"

The Mansonville group were happy to welcome the Russian bishops in October, when they were desperately in need of support against the uniate Synod under Metropolitan Laurus (ROCOR (L)). However, the tragedy was that within a few days they no longer felt any need for them and in effect broke communion with them. For Zhukov wanted to rule the Synod on his own; he cared nothing for the canonical scruples of the Russian bishops, who wanted the convening of a canonical Sobor in order to correct the canonical

---

<sup>467</sup> Shumilo, "Apostasia v Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkvi" (Apostasy in the Russian Church Abroad), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=1032>.

<sup>468</sup> Fr. Spyridon Schneider, internet communication to Theophan Costello, January 2, 2008.



deficiencies of the Mansonville Synod, but wanted with the aid of Bishop Barnabas alone to promote his protégé priests...

"On November 1, 2001," writes Shumilo, "an event took place greatly perplexed many Orthodox Christians. On the initiative of the New York Synod, Metropolitan Vitaly, accompanied by police, was forcibly sent to a psychiatric hospital for testing. This was a great indignity for the person of the Metropolitan, a mockery of his rank and age, but Vladyka Vitaly humbly and with dignity bore it all...

"[On November 3], immediately on the return of Vladyka Metropolitan from hospital, taking advantage of his distraction and under the excuse of 'saving' the Church, on the initiative and under the direct pressure of Protopriest V. Zhukov (who shouted down the phone to Bishop Barnabas: 'Consecrate a bishop immediately, even if it's with a rope around his neck' – this is witnessed by clergy from France and Russia who were present at the conversation), the Vicar-Bishop Barnabas carried out the consecration of Archimandrite Sergius (Kindiakov). The decision to carry out this consecration was taken hastily, it was not discussed in council, and none of the acting hierarchs was informed about it (not to speak of *the necessity that they should give their written consent* to the carrying out of a hierarchical consecration, as is demanded by the church canons and the Statute of ROCOR, see paragraph 11, and the note to this paragraph, also Canon 4 of the First Ecumenical Council: '... and those who are absent must compose an agreement by means of letters: and then the consecration can take place', etc.). Only one consent was obtained to this consecration, together with the Metropolitan's oral blessing – but not immediately, but after some pressure on him (the decisive argument was: 'You can be arrested and the Church will remain without bishops')...

"As many sources witness, the ninety-year-old Metropolitan, by reason of his health had not been able to serve a liturgy since 1999, was very weak and unable to take full part in the consecration of Archimandrite Sergius. He was present at it clad only in a mantia (this is witnessed by photographs: on them Bishop Barnabas and Bishop Sergius are in full hierarchical vestments, but Metropolitan Vitaly is in a mantia), whereas neither a liturgy nor a hierarchical consecration can be carried out in a mantia. *The consecration of Archimandrite Sergius was carried out by Vicar-Bishop Barnabas on his own...*

"*This consecration laid the foundations for the creation of a new church organization – the ROC in Exile (ROCiE, it was under that name that it was registered in France, Canada and the USA)...*

"If, taking into account the exceptional circumstances, for the sake of love and peace and with the aim of averting a schism in the Church, it would have been possible, *in a conciliar fashion, with the application of the broadest economy*, to accept the consecration of Archimandrite Sergius at a Hierarchical Sobor with

a consequent laying of hands [cheirothesia] on him, then all the later 'Mansonville consecrations' [of Bishops Vladimir, Bartholomew, Anthony and Victor] carried out by Bishop Barnabas and Archimandrite Sergius in secret even from Metropolitan Vitaly (without the participation and contrary to the will of the metropolitan) were *openly unlawful*, and it is impossible to accept them."<sup>469</sup>

On November 5, the Mansonville Synod published an ukaz stating that the metropolitan was now to be commemorated as "First-Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile". It was decided that the Church should be incorporated under this name (we recall that Zhukov had already done this in France), and Fr. Joseph Sunderland was appointed as legal advisor to carry this out. However, since a change in name usually signifies a change in Church, the ukaz disturbed many believers and was rejected by the Russian bishops. Archbishop Lazarus even orally forbade the commemoration of the metropolitan for a few weeks. But then, on November 20, the Mansonvillians recognized their mistake and reversed their previous decision, restoring the name "Russian Orthodox Church Abroad". As emerged only later, Metropolitan Vitaly had always been against the change of name. With the original name restored, on November 24 Archbishop Lazarus ordered that the metropolitan's name be commemorated again. Bishop Benjamin issued a similar ukaz.<sup>470</sup>

Also on November 5, the new "Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile" raised Bishop Barnabas to the rank of archbishop with the title "of Cannes and Europe". Strangely, Archbishop Barnabas' signature was not on this document. However, he was all too willing to accept the power it gave him. Thus already on or about November 7, he declared that he would not accept Archbishop Lazarus as senior to himself.<sup>471</sup> And later he claimed that, as deputy to the metropolitan and "Archbishop of Europe", he should have control over the whole of European Russia, thereby excluding Lazarus and Benjamin from the administration of their sees!

Later, the Mansonvillians would describe the meeting at which these decisions were made as "the first Hierarchical Sobor of the regenerated ROCA". And yet much later, on May 20, 2003, they decreed the "establishment of the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad"! The absurdity of establishing the Synod already eighteen months after "the first Hierarchical Sobor of the regenerated ROCA" appears to have escaped the notice of these "rightist revolutionaries".

---

<sup>469</sup> Shumilo, op. cit.

<sup>470</sup> Shumilo, op. cit.; Fr. Spyridon Schneider, letter of November 5, 2007, <http://rocorrefugeesreadmore.blogspot.com/2009/07/rocie-was-started-by-agents.html>

<sup>471</sup> Schneider, op. cit.

After this “first Hierarchical Sobor”, Metropolitan Vitaly left Montreal with his secretary, L. Rosnianskaia, who reported him as having been against the consecration of any more bishops after Archimandrite Sergius, “so that they don’t say that we bake bishops like pies”. He arrived in Mansonville on the evening of November 6. We can imagine his astonishment, therefore, when, that same evening, he saw Hieromonk Vladimir (Tselishev) coming to him with a hierarchical panagia on his breast. For Archbishop Barnabas and Bishop Sergius had ordained him as Vicar-Bishop of Sacramento that day, claiming falsely in the ordination certificate that this had been done with the metropolitan’s blessing. The metropolitan refused to recognize this “consecration”.

However, as in the case with Archimandrite Sergius, they persuaded him to recognize it “for the sake of the good of the Church”. So as to hide the illegality and give the “consecration” an appearance of lawfulness, the signature of the metropolitan was added to the ordination certificate under the printed resolution: “I confirm”.<sup>472</sup>

That this consecration was performed against the will of the metropolitan was confirmed on July 12/25, 2004 by Archbishop Barnabas, when he wrote: “I repent of taking part in the consecration of Bishop Vladimir without your permission”. He had good reason to repent, for the consecration violated the Sixth Canon of the First Ecumenical Council, which says: “If anyone is made a bishop without the permission of the metropolitan, this Great Council has defined that he must not be a bishop”.

This administrative chaos was compounded by yet another uncanonical episcopal consecration. On November 11, Bishops Sergius and Vladimir, without the agreement or blessing, not only of Metropolitan Vitaly, but also, this time, of Archbishop Barnabas also, consecrated Archimandrite Bartholomew (Vorobiev) as Bishop of Grenada.

Later, on July 12/25 Archbishop Barnabas wrote in his penitential letter to Metropolitan Vitaly: “I repent that I did not express my protest in connection with the consecration of Bishop Bartholomew, which was carried out by Bishop Sergius and Bishop Vladimir in spite of your and my decision”. And a lie was added to the lack of canonicity: in Bishop Bartholomew’s ordination certificate it was asserted that the consecration had been carried out by Metropolitan Vitaly.

So all three consecrations – of Sergius, Vladimir and Bartholomew – were carried out contrary to the canons, without the convening of a canonical Hierarchical Sobor, by vicar bishops without the participation of the only two ruling bishops of the Russian Church that were not under ban or in retirement (Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin), in two cases against the will of

---

<sup>472</sup> Shumilo, *op. cit.*

their metropolitan, and in one case secretly from him. We therefore come to the conclusion that if ROCOR (L), at its October Sobor, fell away from the confessing path of the true Russian Church Abroad by its declared intention to unite with the MP and World Orthodoxy, only a few days later ROCOR (V) fell in the opposite direction through its violation of the conciliar norms of the Holy Church as enshrined in the holy canons. Taking advantage of the infirmity of Metropolitan Vitaly and his personal ascendancy over the “Mansonville Synod of Vicars”, Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov accomplished a coup d’église that left Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin as the only canonical survivors of the pre-2001 Bishops of ROCOR.

On November 22 a second attempt to kidnap Metropolitan Vitaly and take him to New York was made by Bishop Michael (Donskov) of Canada, as a result of which the metropolitan anathematized him.<sup>473</sup> When the attempt failed (Canadian judges refused to allow the kidnapping), the Synod of ROCOR (L) issued a statement condemning the action and claiming that it had always wanted to persuade the metropolitan to return by peaceful means. Bishop Michael was freed from governing the Canadian diocese and sent to Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville.<sup>474</sup>

On December 7, Metropolitan Vitaly wrote to all the clergy and flock of the Church Abroad: “The supporters and followers of the so-called self-styled Metropolitan Laurus, who tried to seize ecclesiastical power in our Church Abroad, have departed into complete spiritual tracklessness.

“Seeing the disturbances in our Church, I have returned to myself the rights of head of the Church. In reply to this, the Synod, with the participation of Bishops Michael and Hilarion, raised a real persecution against me. I was subject to arrest at the hands of the civil authorities without the slightest indication of any reason for my guilt. Exclusively in order to cleanse the Church from such apostates, with my blessing and participation the ordinations of new bishops have been carried out: Bishop Vladimir of Sacramento and Bishop Bartholomew of Grenada...

“The apostates headed by Archbishop Laurus cannot be considered to be within the bounds of the Church...”<sup>475</sup>

---

<sup>473</sup> Metropolitan Vitaly’s own certified account of this incident can be found at <http://www.monasterypress.com/metaccount.html>, and in English at “[paradosis] Met Vitaly’s certified account”, [orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com), June 8, 2002. See also Sergius Agu, “Krestnij Put’ Mitropolita Vitalia”, [http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print\\_page&pid=2](http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=2).

<sup>474</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, November, 2001, N 8 (100), p. 5.

<sup>475</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, December, 2001, N 9 (101), p. 8. See “Plody lukavstva”, <http://www.listok.com/article40htm>.

Evidently Patriarch Alexis was speaking the truth when he later said in the media that Metropolitan Vitaly's removal had been a necessary condition of the rapprochement of the MP and ROCOR...<sup>476</sup>

Let us return to the beginning of November. At that time a group of priests led by Protopriest Victor (Melehov), exarch of the flock of the "Holy Orthodox Church of North America" (HOCNA) in Russia, left HOCNA and were received in their existing rank by Metropolitan Vitaly into ROCOR (V). Fr. Victor was then nominated by Fr. Anatoly Trepachko, and unanimously elected by all the clergy and bishops, as Secretary of the newly incorporated "Russian Orthodox Church in Exile", while Fr. Michael Marcinovsky was voted Treasurer.

Later, Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, seeing in Melehov a potential enemy to his plans to take over the Synod, inserted the words "in North America (USA and Canada)" after the word "Secretary" on the ROCiE official website, and also fraudulently claimed that he himself had been made secretary of the Synod on November 5.<sup>477</sup>

Having been appointed secretary, Fr. Victor immediately made his presence felt. As Fr. Spyridon Schneider writes: "Within a few days [on November 8] Fr. Victor came to Mansonville,... and asked them to: 1. renounce the MP and Sergianism; 2. renounce any relationship with the Serbian Church, 3. reaffirm the 1983 anathema against ecumenism, and 4. renounce Cyprian of Fili and his heretical ecclesiology which had been accepted in 1994 by the Synod of Bishops. These issues were discussed for about two and one half hours and when the Metropolitan, the Bishops and Fr. Victor were finished with these discussions they were all very happy that complete agreement had been reached. Soon after the meeting a statement was written by Vladika Vladimir that addressed these four points and faxed to Fr. Victor with all of the Bishops' signatures including Archbishop Barnabas."<sup>478</sup>

This "Declaration of the Hierarchical Synod of ROCiE" appeared on the internet, and declared that (i) that ROCiE had no canonical or Eucharistic communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, and (ii) that there would be a cessation of "the badly thought out establishment in 1994 of Eucharistic communion with the Synod of the Resisters under the Presidency of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili". The latter resolution was signed by "Metropolitan Vitaly, Bishop Sergius for Archbishop Barnabas with his agreement, Bishop Sergius, Bishop Vladimir". Later Archbishop Barnabas,

---

<sup>476</sup> Shumilo, "Kratkaia Istoria Istinno-Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Rossii, 1927-2007", <http://www.catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=1366>.

<sup>477</sup> Schneider, op. cit.

<sup>478</sup> Fr. Spyridon Schneider, "[ROCElaity] Statement concerning Fr. Victor Melehov", 24 January, 2003.

who had left Canada for France the previous day, declared that he had *not* given his agreement to the placing of his signature under this resolution.

However, to the distress of the American clergy, some French clergy began to criticise the condemnation of Cyprian. And on November 7/20 the decree on cessation of communion with the Cyprianites was halted.

But on December 16/29, at a Pastoral Convention of the North American clergy, under the signatures of all the bishops except Archbishop Barnabas, who was not present, the Cyprianite ecclesiology was formally condemned.<sup>479</sup> Barnabas did not protest the decision to break with Cyprian, although he introduced one qualification. However, rumblings of discontent continued from some of the lower French clergy, especially Protodeacon German Ivanov-Trinadtsaty,<sup>480</sup> and two priests with links to the Cyprianites, Michael and Quentin Castelbajac, who joined ROCOR (L). On the other hand, there was support for the decision from others in Western Europe and elsewhere.<sup>481</sup>

The decision to renounce Cyprianism was important, for it signalled a return to the ecclesiology of Metropolitan Philaret, which had been jettisoned when ROCOR joined the Cyprianites in 1994. Formally speaking, it could be argued that this decision was incorrect, since only a canonical Hierarchical Council could overturn the decision of another Hierarchical Council – and, as we have seen, several of the hierarchs at this Council were not canonical, nor

---

<sup>479</sup> The decree read: “Metropolitan Cyprian and his Synod, while recognizing world Orthodoxy to be heretical, nevertheless considers it to be a part of the Church of Christ, thus contradicting the teaching and tradition of the Church, which clearly bears witness in conciliar decrees and the writings of the Holy Fathers to the effect that heretics are fallen away from the Church... Calling for a walling-off from these ailing members, Metropolitan Cyprian nonetheless considers them to be within the Church. However, to permit membership in the Church outside an Orthodox confession of faith is by no means possible; hence, ‘those ailing in faith’ cannot be members of the Church, which is also confirmed by the teachings of the Holy Fathers. ‘Without a doubt,’ says the venerable John Cassian the Roman, ‘he who does not confess the faith of the Church is outside the Church’. The same is confirmed also by Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople: ‘Members of the Church of Christ are wholly devoted to the truth, and those not wholly devoted to the truth are not members of the Church of Christ.’... Metropolitan Cyprian declares in his thesis that ‘the Orthodox Church has become divided into two parts: those who are ailing in the faith and those who are healthy...’ (ch. 3, p. 4). But then he immediately goes on to speak of ‘restoring to Orthodoxy’ those ailing in the faith (ch. 3, p. 5), whereby he clearly falls into a doctrinal contradiction. For how is it possible ‘to receive into Orthodoxy’ those who already are Orthodox?!”

<sup>480</sup> Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, “Po povodu Rezoliutsii Kanadskogo Pastyrskogo Soveschania”, [http://perso.wanadoo.fr/stranitchka/Sobor.ru\\_2000/Resolution\\_Russe.html](http://perso.wanadoo.fr/stranitchka/Sobor.ru_2000/Resolution_Russe.html).

<sup>481</sup> V. Kirillov, “Zametki ob uchenii Mitropolita Kipriana o Tserkvi, v sviazi s Zaiavleniem Arkhierejskogo Sinoda RPTsI ot 26 oktiabria / noiabria 2001 goda”, <http://www.listok.com/article43com>; “Kommentarii na stat’iu protodiakona Germana Ivanov-Trinadtsagogo ‘Po povodu Rezoliutsii Kanadskogo Pastyrskogo Soveschania’”, <http://www.listok.com/sobor168.htm>.

were the canonical bishops in Russia allowed to participate.<sup>482</sup> However, it expressed the truth – and that was the main thing.

The opposition of the French had its roots in the fact that they had lived for many years under the omophorion of Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, the most ecumenist hierarch of ROCOR for at least 20 years until his death in 1993, whom even now they called their “great Abba” and “he who restrained [the coming of the Antichrist]”. And Archbishop Barnabas himself had had a very chequered career. Therefore a root-and-branch examination of the past, with repentance for all mistakes, - conducted, moreover, on the initiative of American clergy, some of whom had broken with ROCOR in 1986 precisely because of their opposition to ROCOR’s ecumenist tendencies under Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Anthony of Geneva - was deeply threatening to them.

This led Fr. Victor and the group of North American clergy to call for: (i) the introduction of order into the administrative chaos of ROCOR (V), which required the convening of a Sobor; and (ii) the introduction of a clear ecclesiology which would help to avoid the mistakes in ecclesiology made by ROCOR in the past and provide a firm foundation for her development in the future.

#### IV. The Russian True Orthodox Church

Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin, while rejecting the decisions of the Mansonville Sobor of November, 2001 as uncanonical, remained in communion with Metropolitan Vitaly and continued to call for a canonical Sobor in which they would take part. Knowing that this would expose his own nefarious activity, Zhukov tried hard to discredit them and the whole idea of a Sobor. Thus on December 2/15, 2002 he wrote in an “Explanation”: “In the conditions that arose at the beginning of 2002, when Archbishop Lazarus was actively trying to acquire the whole of the Russian flock faithful to Metropolitan Vitaly (and consequently the removal of ROCOR from all missionary work in Russia – which was equivalent to its end), the convening of a Sobor became for Her a dangerous undertaking. Only when order would reign in the Church and all her members would know their place, would the participants in the Sobor come with a constructive intention. Then they would be able to say that *truly* “the Grace of the Holy Spirit has brought us together today” and would think, not of themselves, but about the Preservation of the Church of Christ. A hasty convening of a Council would have led to a catastrophe, and for that reason Vladyka Barnabas addressed the Metropolitan with a request that he defer this initiative.”

While putting off the convening of a Sobor, Zhukov incited Archbishop Barnabas to seize as much of Archbishop Lazarus’ flock as possible. Thus on

---

<sup>482</sup> Shumilo, “Apostasia v Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkvi”, op. cit.

December 16, 2001 he accepted under his omophorion the Kursk, Belgorod and some of the Voronezh clergy who belonged to Archbishop Lazarus' diocese. Lazarus reacted fiercely. In a telephone conversation with the warden and treasurer of one of the Voronezh parishes, he declared that Archbishop Barnabas was "defrocked", that the new Synod under Metropolitan Vitaly consisted of people unknown to him, who had simply solicited the Episcopal rank, for which reason he did not recognize it, and that in general they should from now on commemorate only him, Archbishop Lazarus.<sup>483</sup> Lazarus' anger was fully justified.<sup>484</sup>

A full breakdown in relations between the Russian bishops and the Mansonville Synod was averted after a phone call by Bishop Benjamin to Bishop Vladimir on December 20.

However, this partial reconciliation was accepted only grudgingly by Archbishop Barnabas. Thus in January he wrote to Bishop Vladimir: "It is necessary to stop the organization with Vladyka Lazarus and Benjamin. Now action is being taken to destroy our Church in which these bishops involuntarily participate. Therefore it is necessary to keep them in the most limited rights. I, on the other hand, as the deputy of Metropolitan Vitaly, must be given the broadest care for Russia."<sup>485</sup>

It is necessary to remind ourselves that while remaining in communion with Metropolitan Vitaly, the Russian bishops never accepted the canonicity of the consecrations of the Mansonville vicars. Later Zhukov himself recognized this fact. He said that the Russian hierarchs "did not enter our Church, but attached themselves only to Metropolitan Vitaly".<sup>486</sup> This was quite true. For the "Mansonville Synod of Vicars" was an uncanonical organization of uncanonically consecrated bishops. At the same time Zhukov accused the Russian bishops of trying "to obtain a Sobor". A strange accusation! According to Orthodox tradition, all Church conflicts and major Church questions can only be resolved at Councils of Bishops. So trying "to

---

<sup>483</sup> A. Lebedev, "Proiekt Obraschenia kurskogo dukhovenstva (2002 g.) k Arkh. Soboru RPTsZ (V)", <http://www.listok.com/raznoe19.htm>; *Tserkovnie Novosti*, June- July, 2001, N 4 (95), p. 10.

<sup>484</sup> And his anger continued. On February 5, 2002, while declaring to Metropolitan Vitaly that he remained with him "in prayerful, canonical and eucharistic communion", he likened the Kursk, Belgorod and Voronezh clergy "to Core, Dathan and Abiram". The next day he went on to call on the clergy "to cease their anticanonical activity", called Protopriest Oleg Mironov "a wolf in sheep's clothing" and the sacraments performed by him - "graceless". (Lebedev, *op. cit.*)

<sup>485</sup> Shumilo, "Apostasia v Russkoj Zarubezhnoj Tserkvi" (Apostasy in the Russian Church Abroad), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=1032>. Again, in another letter to Vladimir dated March 17 he wrote: "After your insistent request that Bishop Lazarus and Benjamin be received into the bosom of our Church, early in January, 2002 I agreed to their reception on condition that they be given definitely limited authority in the new ecclesiastical organization".

<sup>486</sup> Zhukov, *Mysli o Rossii*, October, 2005.



obtain a Sobor” was quite natural and praiseworthy. It was Zhukov’s (successful) attempt to put off the Sobor that required explanation and justification...

On December 15/28 or 16/29 Metropolitan Vitaly declared at the Pastoral Convention of North American Clergy in Mansonville: “After many long, hard years of trying to manage the Church in Russia from New York, I have learned that it is impossible to manage the Church in Russia from Abroad. We do not know and understand their problems and we do not know their people and possible candidates for the clergy. Without a knowledge of their people and their problems the best that we can do is give them Apostolic Succession and Grace and allow them to organize while maintaining communion with them and praying that they will be able to do something for themselves... There must be a separate administration in Russia, another administration in Europe and a third administration in North America...”

Shortly after this, on December 25 / January 7, 2001/2002, Metropolitan Vitaly issued his “Nativity Epistle and Spiritual Testament” in which he hinted that he was in captivity, and that people should be very careful in trusting everything that was published in his name: “We live in such a time when they can steal men away and in my name begin to try and convince you. Know that from captivity I will not convince you of anything. *Believe only my living word...*”

On January 8/21, 2002 (N 835/65) Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin wrote an “Epistle on the Contemporary Situation of the Orthodox Church” to Metropolitan Vitaly. In it they gave a short characterization of the situation of the Church in the contemporary apostate world, beginning from the time of the God-fighting revolution and until ROCOR’s October, 2000 Council. At this Council non-Orthodox decisions were taken on union with the MP and Eucharistic communion with the ecumenist Serbian patriarchate; the council of 2001 did not repeal these decisions, therefore the hierarchs of ROCOR had fallen “under their own anathema” and the 45<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon, which “categorically forbids communion in prayer with heretics: ‘Let a bishop [...] who has only prayed with heretics be excommunicated /.../ from the Church’ – the Epistle said. Also, reasons were given why the falling of the hierarchs of ROCOR into apostasy had become possible: ‘sergianism and ecumenism have poisoned the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad’. The Epistle went on to say: ‘The Holy Patriarch Tikhon, applying all his strength to preserve the Orthodox Church from the blows of the God-fighters, in his God-inspired Ukaz №362 of November 7/20, 1920 foresaw the form that Church administration would take if the activity of the organs of the Higher Church Authority should cease. The essence of this ukaz can be reduced to this: if the activity of the Higher Church Administration ceases [...] the diocesan bishops takes upon himself the whole fullness of power in his diocese until the formation of a free ecclesiastical administration.

“The Russian Orthodox Church existed on the foundation of this Ukaz. In Russia, after the issuing in 1927 [...] of the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, the Catacomb Church began to be created [...] With the blessing of Patriarch Tikhon and the Locum Tenens Metropolitan Chril, and also on the foundation of Metropolitan Agathangel’s Epistle of June 5/18, 1922, communities of the True Orthodox Church (TOC) were formed under the leadership of the most eminent hierarchs. These communities preserved original Orthodoxy. They suffered especially terrible persecutions. The Bolsheviks ferreted out the “catacombniks” wherever they could, often with the help of priests of the “patriarchate”, who denounced the true bishops and priests to the “organs”. Those who fell into the camps for belonging to the TOC generally did not come out again.

“The whole episcopate of the Russian True Orthodox Church was destroyed. In spite of this, by 1982 quite a few communities of the True Orthodox Christians remained scattered over the whole territory of the Soviet Union, creating an extensive widowed diocese. Archimandrite Lazarus (now Archbishop) was secretly ordained to the Episcopal rank by a ROCOR bishop who came specially from abroad, to rule this diocese.

“After the fall of the Bolshevik regime, the Russian True Orthodox Church acquired a legal status and was officially registered in the Ukraine (registration №356 of June 19, 1993).

“Until October, 2000 no insoluble problems in administration arose. But after the publication of the documents of the October 2000 council of ROCOR a wave of contradictory ukazy, bans and the most varied kinds of false information was poured out upon the Orthodox living on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and chaos, unclarity and confusion was created in administration.

“We, the Russian bishops, on the foundation of ukaz №362 of November 20, 1920 of Patriarch Tikhon, in connection with the complicated situation in ROCOR, on the basis of multiple addresses of the First-Hierarchy of ROCOR Metropolitan Vitaly to the Council of Bishops, in 1998 and 2000, on the provision of independence to the Russian Bishops (of which we are witnesses), and also in connection with all that has been said above, ask the at present lawfully acting Metropolitan Vitaly to provide us with temporary administrative-canonical independence.. We do not refuse to be in spiritual, prayer and Eucharistic communion with those who have not fallen into sergianism, ecumenism or any other heresy, and we also call to repentance all those whom the Lord has not deprived of this great gift.

“We turn to you, beloved in the Lord Vladyko Metropolitan Vitaly. We turn to you as to the eldest First-Hierarchy of ROCOR, chosen by lot, who has preserved the purity of Orthodoxy. We raise your all-honourable name in services and ask your blessing on our beginning.”

Since the Russian bishops were never allowed to speak personally to Metropolitan Vitaly, Archbishop Lazarus entrusted this letter to Protopriest Vladimir, now Bishop Irenaeus, to deliver personally to the metropolitan in Mansonville. Bishop Vladimir refused to allow Fr. Vladimir to see the metropolitan ("you have arrived without warning"), but Vladyka Vitaly, hearing that a priest from Archbishop Lazarus in Russia had come to see him personally, immediately accepted him and gave him hospitality for several days.

In these days Fr. Vladimir managed to convince the metropolitan that Archbishop Lazarus was unanimous with him on all important questions of Church life. So the metropolitan wrote a small letter to Archbishop Lazarus in which he said: "With all my heart I wish you spiritual and archpastoral success in our great common archpastoral stand in the Truth". Then, three days later, on February 26 / March 11, on the official notepaper of the First-Hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Vitaly wrote to Archbishop Lazarus in his own handwriting: "May God bless you to carry out the consecration of new bishops. You must create your own Hierarchical Synod which would be in concord with our Hierarchical Synod. At the next Hierarchical Sobor I will inform all our hierarchs about this situation. Let us be with Russia of one mind and of one soul, while having separate administrations. Church life itself virtually dictates this to us."

This was good and important news. And so on April 4/17 - 5/18, at the Second All-Russian Conference of hierarchs, clergy and laity of RTOC in Voronezh under the presidency of the head of the Hierarchical Conference Archbishop Lazarus and his deputy Bishop Benjamin, "the decision was taken, on the basis of the Holy Canons, the Decree of the Holy Patriarch Tikhon no. 362 and the Directive-Testament of Metropolitan Vitaly of February 26 / March 11, 2002, to carry out hierarchical ordinations for RTOC and to transform the Hierarchical Conference of Russian Bishops of RTOC that had been created with the blessing of the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR in 1994 into the Hierarchical Synod of RTOC."<sup>487</sup>

Maintaining their continued devotion to Metropolitan Vitaly, the Conference reproached Bishop Barnabas for the various anticanonical actions conducted against them in the past, but nevertheless called for peace and cooperation between them.<sup>488</sup>

On April 19, Archbishop Barnabas replied angrily, calling the Conference's

---

<sup>487</sup> Shumilo, *op. cit.*

<sup>488</sup> "Obraschenie rasshirennogo Eparkhial'nogo sobrania Odessko-Tambovskoj i Chernomorsko-Kubanskoj eparkhij k Ego Preosviaschenstvu Preosviannejschemu Varnave Arkhiepiskopu Kannskom i Evropejskomu", <http://russia-talk.com.otklike/ot-213.htm>. See also A. Ter-Grigorian, "Rasshirennoe Eparkhial'noe Sobranie Odessko-Tambovskoj i Chernomorsko-Kubanskom Eparkhii RPTsZ (V) v Voronezhe vyrazhaet nedoverie RPATs", <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/Voronezh.htm>.

address to him “shame” and “deception”, and saying that the “Lazarite schism foreseen by us is trying to wipe her [ROCOR (V)] finally off the face of the earth”.<sup>489</sup>

On April 20, Metropolitan Vitaly met Bishops Sergius and Vladimir and four North American priests, including Fr. Victor Melehov, in Mansonville. They decreed that “in spite of the fact that his Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly gave his personal agreement, the decision on the creation of an ecclesiastical administration in Russia is in the competence of the whole of the Hierarchical Council. Before and without a conciliar decision, in spite of the 34<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Holy Apostles [which decrees that nothing should be done by the hierarchs without the agreement of the first-hierarchy, and vice-versa], that is, in view of its uncanonicity, no separate administration in Russia can be formed. Consequently, hierarchical consecrations can take place in Russia only after a decision of the Hierarchical Council of ROCOR.”

The irony of this statement consisted in the fact that “the Lazarites” had been calling for a Hierarchical Council consistently since the very foundation of ROCOR (V), but Zhukov, followed by his puppet Bishop Barnabas<sup>490</sup>, had always argued against it!

Bishop Benjamin then asked Metropolitan Vitaly: “Should we carry out hierarchical consecrations, or should we refrain from this until a final conciliar decision on the basis of the 34<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon?” He also informed him that Archbishop Lazarus had three candidates for hierarchical consecration and that the consecrations were appointed for Bright Week. Metropolitan Vitaly replied that this question was “exceptionally important and needed a conciliar decision”.<sup>491</sup>

In May Archbishop Lazarus and his Diocesan Council asked again for the summoning of a Council, but with the following “necessary preconditions”: (i) the cessation of all hostile actions and propaganda against the Russian Bishops, and an apology for the latest public insults; (ii) the cessation of attempts to usurp ecclesiastical power by exploiting the difficult position of the first hierarchy; (iii) respect for the rights of the Russian Bishops, including those that were given them by the decree of Metropolitan Vitaly in March; (iv) a clear declaration by the non-Russian bishops whether they were intending to establish a Church in Russia, or join Suzdal or the Greek Old Calendarists.

It should be pointed out that the fact that the Russian bishops were ready to join with ROCOR (V) in a common Council did not mean that they accepted any of the consecrations carried out by ROCOR (V) since they were

---

<sup>489</sup> *Vertograd*, N 241, 20 April, 2002; *Tserkovnie Novosti*, N 4 (105), May, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>490</sup> As Zhukov said to the present writer in Paris in November, 2002, “Bishop Barnabas is the heart of this diocese, but I am the head”!

<sup>491</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti*, N 4 (105), May, 2002, p. 5.

contrary to the holy canons and the ROCOR's *Statute*. And so Archbishop Lazarus continued not to recognize the "Mansonville Synod of Vicars".<sup>492</sup>

Spring passed into summer, and still no Sobor was convened. Finally, in August, despairing of the possibility of the convening of a Sobor that would discuss all these questions as well as the consecration of bishops for Russia, the Russian bishops consecrated four new bishops: Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia, Hermogen of Chernigov and Gomel, Irenaeus of Verney and Semirechiye and Dionysius of Novgorod and Tver.<sup>493</sup> They felt that they had the right to do this, on the basis not only of Metropolitan Vitaly's blessing, but also of Patriarch Tikhon's ukaz no. 362 of November 20, 1920.

On August 21, however, Metropolitan Vitaly and four ROCOR (V) hierarchs condemned the consecrations as "uncanonical" and the initiators of it as being "outside the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad".<sup>494</sup> Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin were then condemned without a trial or summons to a trial. For, as Zhukov argued, "to summon Bishops Lazarus and Benjamin to a Sobor would be a crime against our Church. Since any variant of their presence at the Sobor, whether to recognize or not to recognize the consecrations carried out by them, or for a trial on them themselves, would lead to the annihilation of our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad."<sup>495</sup>

So, according to this logic, to expel the Russian bishops through a lawful canonical trial would be more destructive of the Church than to expel them uncanonically and without a trial!

Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin never received official notification that they were banned from serving.<sup>496</sup> They continued to recognize Metropolitan Vitaly as head of their Church, declaring that his signatures were being forged and that he was "in captivity" to Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov and L.D. Rosnianskaia "and in complete isolation from the

---

<sup>492</sup> Only in his declaration "with regard to the Resolution of the Conference of the North American Bishops of ROCOR on April 7/20, 2002", did he declare himself ready to accept it as "a temporary ecclesiastical administration, carrying out chancellery duties attached to the Metropolitan". (Lebedev, op. cit.)

<sup>493</sup> Eugene Sokolov writes: "In an interview for radio given to me by Vladyka Tikhon during his recent visit to the USA, the president of the Russian True Orthodox Church told me that Vladyka Lazarus at first demanded the convening of a Council at which it would be possible to discuss all questions, including the ordinations, but certain forces slowed down [the convening of] this Council. In the words of Vladyka Tikhon, the new ordinations were carried out only after it became evident that the promised Council would not take place" ("S Bol'noj Golovy na Zdorovuiu", *Nasha Strana* (Argentina), N 2821, June 2, 2007, p. 4).

<sup>494</sup> <http://www.russia-talk.com/otkliki/ot-238.htm>; *Tserkovnie Novosti*, № 10 (111), October, 2002, pp. 3-5. On November 1/14 Metropolitan Vitaly and Archbishop Barnabas confirmed the decree of August 8/21 expelling the Russian bishops from the Church (*Church News*, December, 2002, vol. 13, N 12 (113), p. 5).

<sup>495</sup> Zhukov, Open Letter to Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky, September 14/27, 2002.

<sup>496</sup> Sokolov, op. cit.

external world".<sup>497</sup> The present writer has personal experience of this. In January, 2003, in Mansonville, Rosnianskaia blocked his and Hieromonk Augustine Lim's access to the metropolitan, although Bishop Sergius of Mansonville had given his blessing...

Having finally succeeded in manipulating the expulsion of the Russian bishops, Zhukov now proceeded to further purges within the church organization that he controlled. The American priests led by Fr. Victor Melehov had been shown alarming signs of a concern for canonical order. So it was now their turn...

The movement to oust Melehov had begun some months before. In June, 2002 he was informed by Bishop Vladimir that he was the secretary only of North America. In July, he was told by Bishop Vladimir that he recalled that Fr. Benjamin Zhukov was in fact the secretary of ROCiE. In September, Fr. Victor made preparations for Metropolitan Vitaly's visit to Russia, but the visit was stopped by Zhukov. In October, he began to receive anonymous letters telling him that he would be suspended and defrocked.<sup>498</sup>

And so, writes Fr. Victor, "when, in October, 2002, there was published on the official site of ROCOR (ROCiE) the preconiliar report of the secretary of ROCOR (ROCiE), Protopresbyter Victor Melehov, on the situation of the ROCOR, together with a projected confession of faith to be sent to the flock, Protopresbyter Victor Melehov did not only not receive any response from the hierarchs on the ecclesiological questions, but was subjected to reproaches by Bishop Vladimir for publishing this report.

"Some hope that the hierarchs would be able to come out with an Orthodox confession of faith appeared after Bishops Bartholomew and Sergius, at the beginning of November, 2002, in response to the worries of the North American clerics, signed a letter-appeal demanding the immediate convening of a Hierarchical Council, the removal of the commission that was blocking its convening, the resolution of the problem with Archbishop Lazarus and the necessity of the acceptance of a confession of faith by the clergy of ROCOR (ROCiE). Bishops Bartholomew and Sergius also signed the text of this confession of faith. However, after talking to Bishop Vladimir and Archbishop Barnabas, they withdrew their signatures.

"Bishop Bartholomew decided to compose a new appeal to all the clergy and faithful of ROCiE on the catastrophic situation of ROCiE and the necessity of accepting a confession of faith. This letter of November 13/26, 2002, together with the former text of the confession of faith, was again signed

---

<sup>497</sup> "Zaiavlenie Kantseliarii Arkhierejskogo Sinoda RPTsZ (V-L) o nedavnikh pis'makh mitropolita Vitalia", *Vertograd*, N 376, 22 August, 2003. See also the declaration of June 24, published in *Vertograd*, N 369, June 28, 2003; *Church News*, vol. 14, N 66 (120), pp. 3-5.

<sup>498</sup> Nathanael Kapner, based on an interview with Fr. Victor.

by Bishop Bartholomew. However, on the very day when the letter should have been placed on the official site, Bishop Bartholomew again withdrew his signature, fearing, in his words, 'to bite the bullet'.

"This letter was nevertheless published on the official site of ROCiE signed only by the secretary of ROCiE, Protopresbyter Victor Melehov, and the dean of the Western American deanery, Protopriest Joseph Sunderland. The confession of faith was signed by these clerics and by Priests Michael Martsinovsky, Andrew Kencis and Mark Smith.

"The letter had not been on the official site of ROCiE for one day before it was removed on the demand of the episcopate of ROCiE, and many learned of its contents from other sources.

"On December 9, 2002, Bishop Bartholomew officially informed us that his signature on the appeal of the North American clerics was invalid and was being removed (and this in spite of the fact that the appeal had been published without his signature)..."<sup>499</sup>

The final act in this shameful episode was the uncanonical expulsion of the still-unyielding American clerics led by Fr. Victor Melehov. It was officially announced on January 18, 2003 that he had never been secretary of the ROCOR (V), that he had been admitted into the Church "by an oversight" and that he was actually a defrocked ex-clergyman.<sup>500</sup> In February, Fr. Victor received a letter from Metropolitan Vitaly, Bishops Barnabas, Bartholomew and others stating that "ROCiE does not know Fr. Victor Melehov". This was the height of anti-canonical arbitrariness: no trial, no summons to a trial, not even a more or less plausible accusation, but only: "We do not know you"!

Fr. Victor summed up the situation well: "Factually speaking, the ship of our Church is without direction and is being borne along in complete darkness and obscurity... The main aim of the Synod of Laurus - to paralyze the activity of the Metropolitan as First-Hierarch and not to allow the restoration of our Synod - has been attained... Our brothers in France apparently do not even realize that they are in the same camp as the Synod of Laurus and the other opponents of our Church, who are abusing the Metropolitan-elder in every way..."<sup>501</sup>

On June 22 / July 5, 2003, "the canonical organ of administration of the parishes of RTOC - the Hierarchical Conference of Russian Bishops - was transformed into the Hierarchical Synod of the Russian True Orthodox Church as 'a small constantly acting council of bishops' (literally the word

---

<sup>499</sup> Melehov, "The French Ecclesiology and the Fall of ROCOR" (MS).

<sup>500</sup> See the commentary on this by A. Ter-Grigorian, "Liubov', smirenje, dobrota - i chuvstvo iumora", and "Zhivie i mertvy", [www.romanitas.ru/aktualnoe](http://www.romanitas.ru/aktualnoe).

<sup>501</sup> "Ocherednie chistki", op. cit.



'synod' in Greek means gathering, council). The oldest Russian hierarch, Archbishop Lazarus of Odessa and Tambov, was elected as President of the Hierarchical Synod of RTOC."<sup>502</sup>

On June 24 / July 7, 2005, shortly after the death of Archbishop Lazarus, Bishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia was elected first-hierarchy of RTOC.

### *V. The Plotters fall into their own Net*

Archbishop Barnabas was now at the height of his power. However, his fall was to be precipitate. Anton Ter-Grigorian writes: "Soon after getting rid of Fr. Victor [Melehov] and the priests and laity who supported him, Archbishop Barnabas lost the need for the all-powerful cleric of his diocese, Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov, who after the 'general victory' over 'the Melehov schism' began to demonstrate too much independence... He was soon distanced from closeness with Archbishop Barnabas, and the closest advisor of the 'deputy of the First Hierarchy' again became Protodeacon German Ivanov-Trinadtsaty."<sup>503</sup>

His power began to slip at the Sobor which Zhukov now graciously allowed to convene from May 3/16 to 7/20, 2003. Three candidates were put forward for the episcopacy: Archimandrite Anthony (Rudej), as vicar of the European diocese with the title Bishop of Balt and Moldovia; Hieromonk Anastasy (Surzhik), as ruling Bishop of the Far Eastern diocese with the title Bishop of Vladivostok and the Far East; and Priest Victor Pivovarov, as a vicar of the European diocese with the title Bishop of Slavyansk and South Russia. These candidacies were confirmed, although Archbishop Barnabas was opposed to that of Pivovarov. He asked instead that the candidacy of Archimandrite Alexis (Makrinov) and Hieromonk Joseph (Philosophov) be considered. He also asked that all priests and laymen coming from the dioceses of Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin should be received by repentance.<sup>504</sup>

On June 26, 2003 Archbishop Barnabas issued an ukaz criticizing Zhukov for anti-canonical behaviour, and demanding that he return his diocesan seal and facsimile signature, which Barnabas suspected he had been using unlawfully. Zhukov rejected the ukaz and flatly refused to give back the seal and signature. Instead, he stirred up such a vicious campaign against the bishop that "six out of the eight 'French' parishes very soon began to demand from the Synod 'the replacement of the Bishop' and even 'the defrocking of

---

<sup>502</sup> Shumilo, "Apostasia", op. cit.

<sup>503</sup> Ter-Grigorian, "Kuriezny: Episkopy RPTsZ (v) pytaiutsa reshit' svoi naibolee ser'ieznie kanonicheskie problemy, odnovremennno prodolzhaia oblichat' 'melekhovskij raskol'", <http://romanitas.ru/Actual/Sin.htm>.

<sup>504</sup> "Iz protokola Zasedaniy Arkhierejskogo Sobora Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi Zagranitsej", <http://www.listok.com/sobor204.htm>



Archbishop Barnabas’.” Barnabas was forced to leave the parish. Taking advantage of his master’s absence, Zhukov summoned Bishops Vladimir and Sergius from Canada, who, on Archbishop Barnabas’ canonical territory, and against his will, proceeded to consecrate Fr. Victor Ponomarov - who was not only a KGB agent with the nickname “Ponomar”<sup>505</sup>, but had also been defrocked by his former bishop, Benjamin of the Black Sea, and was considered to be a heretic by Bishop Sergius – and Fr. Anastasy (Surzhik) to the episcopate. Several weeks after this scandalous event, Archbishop Barnabas received his diocesan seal and facsimile signature in the post from Zhukov – they were no longer needed by him!<sup>506</sup>

Zhukov then proceeded to convene a Synod meeting from November 14/27 to 16/29, at which three independent dioceses were formed. The Russian part of Archbishop Barnabas’ diocese was removed from him and divided between Bishop Anthony of Moldova, who took Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and Bishop of Victor of South Russia, who took the North-West, the Centre, the Volga and the Southern regions of Russia with Georgia, while “separating those parishes whose priests want to continue commemorating Archbishop Barnabas”. As for Barnabas himself, he was confined to Western Europe. Bishop Anastasy’s Far Eastern diocese was enlarged to include the Japanese islands, Korea and China (where there were no ROCOR parishes!), while the Siberian diocese (including the Urals district and Kazakhstan) was also entrusted temporarily to Bishop Anastasy.

Then the bishops declared Archbishop Barnabas’ acceptance of some Romanian new calendarist parishes into his diocese as uncanonical<sup>507</sup>, removed Barnabas’ title of “Deputy of the First Hierarch”, and defrocked one of his clerics, Hieromonk Seraphim (Baranchikov), for immorality.<sup>508</sup>

On November 6/19, 2004 the Synod issued the following anathematization: “To those who affirm the antichristian heresy of Sergianism; who teach that the Church of Christ is supposedly saved by union with the enemies of Christ, and reject the exploit of martyrdom and confession, and construct a false

---

<sup>505</sup> In January, 2004 the secretary of ROCiE’s Diocesan Assembly, V. Cherkasov-Georgievsky, quoted a KGB document describing a visit to a Christian Peace Conference in America by Bishop Victor, then a cleric of the Moscow Patriarchate, and working for the KGB under the code-name “Sacristan” (“Ponomar”) (Head of the fourth department of the Fifth Administration of the KGB, Colonel V.I. Timoshevsky, f. 6, op. 12, N 110, d. III-175, t. 1; quoted in <http://cherksoft.narod.ru/mit13.htm>)

<sup>506</sup> Ter-Grigorian, *op. cit.*; “Ocherednie chistki...”, *op. cit.*

<sup>507</sup> “In late 2003,” writes Fr. Spyridon Schneider, “it became apparent that Bishop Barnabas of Cannes had nullified an ukaz by Metropolitan Vitaly which prohibited new calendar churches from entering into communion with the Russian Church Abroad. When Bishop Barnabas was confronted with the fact that he had new calendar Romanian parishes under his omophorion in France, he denied the charges” (e-mail to Theophan Costello, January 2, 2008)

<sup>508</sup> “Postanovlenia Arkhierejskogo Sinoda RPTsZ ot 14/27 po 16/29 noiabria 2003g.”, <http://www.listok.com/sobor219htm>.

church on the foundation of Judas, and for its sake permit the transgression and distortion of Christian teaching, canons and moral laws; who command Christians to bow down to the God-hating authorities as if they were given by God, and to serve them not out of fear but for conscience's sake, blessing all their iniquities; who justify the persecutions against the True Church of Christ at the hands of the God-haters, thinking thereby that they serve God, as was done in fact by the continuers of the renovationist heresy, Metropolitan Sergius and all his followers – **Anathema!**”

But right-believing anathemas could not conceal the inner corruption of the Synod. For Archbishop Barnabas, the coup de grâce was not long in coming. On December 7, 2003, striking out against his tormentors, he banned Zhukov from serving.<sup>509</sup> However, on January 19, 2004, brushing aside an explanatory letter from Archbishop Barnabas<sup>510</sup>, Metropolitan Vitaly and the North American bishops declared this act to be invalid, saying that Barnabas had “exceeded his rights” (although Fr. Benjamin was a priest of Archbishop Barnabas’ diocese, and directly subject to his authority), and placing him “in retirement”.<sup>511</sup> On July 8 the Synod banned him from serving.<sup>512</sup> On July 25 he wrote a penitential letter to Metropolitan Vitaly, repenting of many of his acts in the last few years.<sup>513</sup> But this repentance only enraged his enemies. At the

---

<sup>509</sup> The reason, according to *Vertograd* (N 420, January 23, 2004) was as follows: “Archbishop Barnabas doubted the authenticity of the signature of the first hierarch Metropolitan Vitaly on an ukaz of December 4/28 [sic], according to which a part of the West European diocese was placed under the omophorion of Bishop Victor (Pivovarov) of Slaviansk and South Russia. This served as a reason for the ban on Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, whom Archbishop Barnabas accused of forging the document since he was secretary of the Synod. From the letters in defence of Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov it appears that he could have been so bold as to sign for Metropolitan Vitaly, although, as these declarations say in his justification, with the knowledge of all the hierarchs of the Synod.

“The ukaz banning Fr. Benjamin was issued by Archbishop Barnabas at the beginning of December, 2003, but Fr. Benjamin was acquainted with it only at the beginning of January, moreover completely by accident.

“The true reason for the conflict between the hierarch and Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov was the refusal of Archbishop Barnabas to take part in the consecration of a bishop for Russia – that is, of Bishop Victor of Slaviansk and South Russia. In June, 2003 in the church of the New Martyrs of Russia near Paris, where Fr. Benjamin serves, consecrations of bishops for Russia took place. The consecrations were carried out to a large extent at the request of the Russian members of ROCOR (V) to give bishops and create new independent dioceses on the territory of Russia. Earlier they were in the European diocese under the omophorion of Archbishop Barnabas. Archbishop Barnabas’ ecclesiology and certain dubious actions of his from a canonical point of view had long elicited the anxiety of the Russian flock. Fearing to lose parishes on the territory of Russia, Archbishop Barnabas refused to take part in the consecration of Vladyka Victor.”

<sup>510</sup> “Obraschenie Arkhiepiskopa Varnavy k Episkopam Sergiu, Vladimiru i Varfolomeiu po povodu Istinnogo Polozhenia v RPTsZ (V)” (*Vertograd*, N 439, March 6, 2004).

<sup>511</sup> See the article by Zhukov and his supporters, “Obzor Polozhenia v Zapadno-Evropejskoj Eparkhii RPTsZ (V): Otkrytoe Pis'mo Klirikov”, <http://cherksoft.narod.ru/mut96.htm>; *Vertograd*, N 473, June 15, 2004.

<sup>512</sup> <http://listok.com/sobor243.htm>.

<sup>513</sup> <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=639>

November Hierarchical Sobor he was defrocked - naturally, without a trial or summons to a trial...<sup>514</sup>

On January 27 / February 9, 2005 Archbishop Barnabas issued a "sorrowful epistle" in which he said that he did not recognize "the so called 'Mansonville Synod'" as having any power or significance, since "it had shown its complete incompetence and its deeply uncanonical conduct of its affairs".<sup>515</sup> Shortly after this, Barnabas joined the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus, recognizing the original ban placed on him in April, 2001...<sup>516</sup>

The further disintegration of the Mansonville Synod was now unstoppable. On June 3, 2006 the Synod's official site published a declaration of Zhukov, Bishop Vladimir and Bishop Bartholomew, announcing that power in their Synod had been seized by Archbishop Anthony (Orlov), Bishop Victor (Pivovarov) and a certain Irina Mitse-Goldberg. Anthony declared Metropolitan Vitaly to be incompetent, made charges against Bishops Vladimir and Bartholomew, and took over the Church with Bishop Victor.

Archbishop Anthony was a married man who, secretly from Metropolitan Vitaly and his own wife, had been consecrated to the episcopate in 2002 in Paris by Bishops Barnabas and Sergius. For two years, this consecration had been a secret, and was only revealed in 2004 on the internet. For a long time Metropolitan Vitaly did not recognize this consecration, but Zhukov finally forced him to give in. Although all the bishops knew that Anthony, as Priest Nicholas Orlov, had been living in a church marriage with his wife at the time of his consecration, they still recognized it, and even, at Zhukov's insistence, raised him to the rank of "archbishop" and "deputy of the First-Hierarchy" in place of Barnabas. Anthony's church divorce was formalized two years after his consecration. His civil marriage remained in force...<sup>517</sup>

On June 22, 2006 Metropolitan Vitaly, under pressure from Archbishop Anthony, Bishop Victor and Archimandrites Damascene (Balabanov) and Stefan (Babaev), was invited to the local police station so that he could officially, without outside influence, express his will regarding their presence in Mansonville. When the police officer asked: "Does Metr. Vitaly wish that Orlov, Pivovarov, Balabanov, Babaev and Mitze leave the territory of the Transfiguration Skete?" the metropolitan replied firmly: "Yes, I wish it." Archbishop Anthony tried to persuade the metropolitan to change his mind,

---

<sup>514</sup> "A few clergy in France and Fr. Anatoly Trepatschko, his family and parish in the USA joined Bishop Barnabas. Later, Bishop Barnabas, the founding hierarchy of ROCiE finally returned to ROCOR under the omophorion of Metropolitan Laurus... When Bishop Barnabas returned to the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus, Fr. Anatoly, his family and his parish went under the omophorion of Archbishop Tikhon of the Lazarus Synod." (Schneider, e-mail to Theophan Costello, January 2, 2008.)

<sup>515</sup> <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=639>

<sup>516</sup> <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=924>.

<sup>517</sup> "Ocherednie chistki...", op. cit.

but the police officer said: "Enough. The answer has been received." The group were then asked by the police to leave Mansonville before July 25. The next day, June 23, Archbishop Anthony issued an ukaz saying that he counted it "his duty temporarily to take over the administration of ROCOR" because of the poor health of the metropolitan, "who is not able sometimes even to recognize his deputy and bishops" because of the "inconsistence and false ukazy cancelling the previous ukaz signed by the First Hierarchy" and because of the "malicious isolation of the First Hierarchy".<sup>518</sup>

The disintegration continued. In 2006 Bishop Victor broke from archbishop Anthony and formed his own Synod together with Bishop Damascene (Balabanov). These two were later to split again.... Archbishop Anthony, meanwhile, had taken to calling himself "Metropolitan of Moscow, Los Angeles and all Abroad"!

On September 12/25, 2006 Metropolitan Vitaly reposed. Fr. Spyridon Schneider writes that this "marked a turning point in the life of ROCiE. When Metropolitan Vitaly reposed... there were four bishops remaining in the Vitaly Synod. Bishop Vladimir of San Francisco and Western America, Bishop Bartholomew of Edmonton and Western Canada (who is in the advanced stages of Parkinson's disease and has severe dementia), Bishop Anthony of Moldova and Bishop Anastassy of Vladivostok. Bishop Vladimir became temporary acting First Hierarchy on the basis of the fact that he, at the age of thirty nine, was the oldest bishop by ordination.

"... In the early winter of 2006 Protopriest Benjamin Zhukov and Bishop Anthony of Moldova sent Protopriest Nicholas Semenov from Brussels to Edmonton, Canada with a document for Bishop Bartholomew to sign. Through intrigue and deceit Bishop Bartholomew, not knowing and understanding what he was signing, applied his signature to this document. The document was an ukaz retiring Bishop Anastassy of Vladivostok. This action was taken in a totally uncanonical and unethical manner, without due process, without a meeting of the Synod, without the presence of the Acting First Hierarchy and without following the Regulations which govern the Russian Church Abroad."<sup>519</sup>

On May 12, 2007, continues Fr. Spyridon, "at a meeting with Bishop Vladimir which included Archpriest Constantine Fyodorov, Archpriest Spyridon Schneider and Priest Andrew Kencis, Bishop Vladimir explained that he intends to call a Sobor of Bishops with the full knowledge and expectation that Bishop Anthony of Moldova and the Secretary of the Synod, Archbishop Benjamin Zhukov, will not attend. Bishop Vladimir explained that he will call the Sobor in Edmonton, Canada so that Bishop Bartholomew... can participate in the first session of the Sobor. Bishop

---

<sup>518</sup> *Vertograd*, N 53, June 25, 2006.

<sup>519</sup> Schneider, e-mail to Theophan Costello, January 2, 2008.

Vladimir further explained that if Protopriest Zhukov and Bishop Anthony do not come to the Sobor, as expected, then Bishop Vladimir, Bishop Bartholomew and Bishop Anastasy will constitute a quorum. Therefore when the meeting is convened the first item on the agenda will be to consider and accept Bishop Bartholomew's petition to retire from one year ago. This decision will be made with the vote of Bishop Bartholomew. Once Bishop Bartholomew is retired then he will no longer participate, nor will he be counted as a member of the Synod. Consequently, Bishop Vladimir and Bishop Anastasy will then have a two-third majority of the votes which would allow them to go forward with their agenda for the future of the Church. Bishop Vladimir further explained that Fr. Benjamin Zhukov, although he is secretary of the Synod and has always voted in the Synod meetings, will not have a vote because he is a priest and not a bishop..."<sup>520</sup>

Zhukov could never submit to such a demotion. On November 1/14, 2007, at his instigation, Bishop Anthony (Rudej) of Moldova, secretly and on his own, consecrated Archimandrite Seraphim (Skuratov) as Bishop of Birmingham, and then, with Bishop Seraphim, Fr. Roman Apostolescu as Bishop of Brussels..."<sup>521</sup> With the departure of Zhukov from the scene of the Synod he both created and destroyed, we shall end our account of ROCOR (V). The disintegration has continued in recent years, as was only to be expected. For, as the Greek Old Calendarist Confessor Papa Nicholas Planas said, "Whatever has been done uncanonically cannot stand – it will fall..."<sup>522</sup>

---

<sup>520</sup> Schneider, e-mail to Theophan Costello, January 2, 2008.

<sup>521</sup> <http://kirillov-v-y.livejournal.com/2291.html#cutid1>

<sup>522</sup> Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, *Papa-Nicholas Planas*.

## VI. Heresy and Corruption in Suzdal

The second bishop to be consecrated for ROCOR inside Russia during the 1990s, after Archbishop Lazarus, was Bishop Valentine (Rusantsev) of Suzdal. Having been unlawfully expelled by the ROCOR in 1996 together with three other bishops consecrated by him and Archbishop Lazarus,<sup>523</sup> and having taken part neither in the dogmatic errors of the shameful October Sobor of 2000, nor in the canonical violations of both ROCOR (L) and ROCOR (V) in 2001, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (ROAC) under Metropolitan Valentine was in a relatively strong canonical position at the beginning of the new millennium. However, strong suspicions had often been voiced about the personality and history of the first hierarch himself, who while in the MP had received many medals from the God-fighting state and had two charges of homosexuality against him dropped – through the intervention of the KGB, as many thought. His relatively strong performance in the 1990s had begun to dispel these suspicions; but now a new threat appeared which exposed his real character, and the weakness of his Church organization, in a glaringly unattractive light...

The threat appeared in the form of a group of intellectualist refugees from ROCOR in St. Petersburg, led by the Byzantinist Basil Lourié. From the time they joined ROAC in 1999, this group made no secret of their plans to “reform” it in accordance with their perverted understanding of patristic tradition, which involved: a heretical, Manichaean approach to marriage and sexuality; an almost Nietzschean fascination with popular culture and rock music and its cult of death and suicide<sup>524</sup>; a negative attitude to the pre-revolutionary Russian Church; a cool attitude towards the Catacomb Church; a “positive” attitude towards Stalin; an approval of the “name-worshipping” heresy of Fr. Anthony Bulatovich; and several other deviations.

However, Metropolitan Valentine was only too eager to use this group to raise the educational standard of his clergy and the general profile of ROAC in Russian society. He blessed their often interesting, but also often highly controversial publications, especially *Vertograd-Inform* (which began life in ROCOR), which the Petersburg group published in collaboration with other “near-Church” intellectuals, such as Alexander Soldatov (the chief editor), Egor Kholmogorov and Michael Kiselev. And, overlooking Lourié’s

---

<sup>523</sup> V. Moss, “Rossijskaia Pravoslavnaia Avtonomnaia Tserkov’ – kratkaia istoria (1992-1998)”, *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti*, N8, June-September, 1999, pp. 7-18; “The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church - A Short History (1982-1998)”, *Vertograd*, NN16-17, February-March, 2000, pp. 12-37.

<sup>524</sup> On this, perhaps the most alarming of all the various aspects of Lourié’s heresies, see Hieromonk Nectarius (Yashunsky), “Ne ktomu zmej”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/Zmei.htm>.



unscrupulous use of mafia connections<sup>525</sup> and his uncanonical abandonment of his wife and child, he ordained him to the priesthood.

Alarm-bells began to ring in 2000, when Lourié published a book entitled *The Calling of Abraham*, which claimed that sexual relations in marriage were sinful, and that the celibate and monastics possessed the grace of the New Testament, while the married were merely “Old Testament Christians”. Alarmed by criticisms of this work, the metropolitan, instead of investigating the book himself and coming to a decision about it in the Synod, blessed the publication of a critique of Lourié’s book by four authors (including the present writer) entitled *Marriage, the Law and Grace* (Moscow, 2001).

In the winter of 2000-2001 further alarm was caused when a disciple of Lourié, Hierodeacon Theophanes (Areskin), began a series of lectures to clergy in Suzdal in which he praised the “name-worshipping” heresy of Fr. Anthony Bulatovich, who was condemned by Patriarch Tikhon and the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>526</sup> The leader of the attacks on Lourié and Areskin was Protopriest Andrew Osetrov, the secretary of the Synod and a close collaborator with Metropolitan Valentine. In March, the metropolitan turned to the present writer, asking him to enter into a dialogue with Lourié in order to ascertain his true views on name-worshipping and other matters, assuring him (Moss) that if he found his (Lourié’s) views to be heretical, he would bring him to trial before the Holy Synod.

The dialogue began, and would no doubt have continued peacefully if Osetrov had not brought the issue to a head in a Synod meeting at the end of April, during which, supported initially by the Catacomb Archbishop Seraphim of Sukhumi, he demanded that the metropolitan condemn Lourié. When the metropolitan refused in a particularly crude form, Osetrov left ROAC. The next day, at the glorification of Metropolitan Philaret of New York as a saint of the Russian Church, Archbishop Seraphim served with the metropolitan, demonstrating his loyalty to him for the time being and his separation from Osetrov – probably because Osetrov had not contented himself with attacks on heresy within the Church, but had proceeded publicly to accuse the metropolitan of paedophilia...

Osetrov told parishioners in Suzdal that he had a video film showing interviews of adolescents admitting to intimate relations with the metropolitan. This film turned out to be less incriminating than Osetrov claimed, and would in any case have been inadmissible as evidence in a court

---

<sup>525</sup> See Deacon Nikolai Savchenko, “Ob obstoiatel’stvakh vykhoda iz redsoвета zhurnala Vertograd”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/savchenko.htm>.

<sup>526</sup> For a detailed exposure of this heresy, see V.Moss, “The Name of God and the Name-worshipping Heresy”, [http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/69\\_ON\\_THE\\_NAME\\_OF\\_GOD.pdf](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/69_ON_THE_NAME_OF_GOD.pdf), [http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/287\\_THE\\_NAME\\_OF\\_GOD\\_Russian\\_.pdf](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/287_THE_NAME_OF_GOD_Russian_.pdf)

of law. More serious was the accusation of the well-respected Hieromonk Paisius (Gorbunov) that he personally had witnessed a homosexual act of Metropolitan Valentine in 1995. Enormous pressure was brought to bear on Fr. Paisius, who repented of his accusation, then reaffirmed it and fled into hiding (with the help of his spiritual father, Archbishop Seraphim).

The metropolitan now demanded the defrocking of those clerics (about five) who accused him of immorality, and eventually obtained the signatures of the other bishops – although Archbishop Seraphim delayed signing for six weeks. Between June and August the Vladimir newspaper *Prizyv* printed a series of eight articles in support of Osetrov's accusations. Fighting to stay out of prison, the metropolitan claimed that *Prizyv* had received direct orders from the Vladimir public prosecutor's office and regional administration to publish "compromising material on Valentine".

In an interview with Keston College's Geraldine Fagan on March 26, 2002, Osetrov "maintained that, since Metropolitan Valentin had actively restored churches whereas the Moscow Patriarchate had been quite incompetent in that area, he had 'enjoyed some kind of protection' from the Suzdal authorities. Fr Osetrov admitted that he himself had been instrumental in maintaining this state of affairs throughout the ten years during which he had worked as synodal secretary to Metropolitan Valentin, initially having been ordained in ROCA. When any accusations against the Metropolitan of homosexual practice - a criminal offence in Russia until 1993 - or sexual abuse were made, he said, he 'arranged everything so that they died away or got lost in bureaucratic channels.' Once he had been removed after protesting that ROAC clergy who preached heresies were not being dealt with, said Fr Osetrov, his protection of Metropolitan Valentin had ceased: 'This time I gathered evidence and sent it to reliable people in the Lubyanka [the headquarters of the FSB] and the Vladimir public prosecutor's office.' Had the affair been left to the Suzdal public prosecutor, he maintained, 'it would have been completely covered up.'

"When Keston asked how Fr Osetrov had managed to serve in the ROAC for ten years without suspecting Metropolitan Valentin, he replied that the accusation of homosexuality (*golubizna*) was commonly used as an easy way of discrediting a person in the Soviet period. While the rumours about Metropolitan Valentin grew from year to year, he said, they were at first vague and he was disinclined to believe them until some of his own children began to relate details they had heard at school. Fr Osetrov said that he then discovered that the Suzdal authorities' protection of Metropolitan Valentin dated back to 1988 – 'I was shocked, both the local police and administration knew everything.' In that year, said Fr Osetrov, local police investigated the then criminal activities of 70 homosexuals in Vladimir region, including then Archimandrite Valentin. An article in the May-September issue of *Suzdal Diocesan News*, partially edited by Fr Osetrov, contains computer scans from



the original police files on Criminal Case No. 0543, including various witness statements graphically describing homosexual activity involving Archimandrite Valentin. According to Fr Osetrov, this was why the Moscow Patriarchate attempted to transfer Archimandrite Valentin from the town of Suzdal, in response to which he ultimately left the Moscow Patriarchate. In his view, the only possible reason why Archimandrite Valentin was not prosecuted by the authorities at that time was because 'he was working for the KGB,' who, he said, most probably used his sexual orientation to compromise him.

"When interviewed by Keston on 19 October, ROAC Archbishop Feodor continued to maintain that the allegations against Metropolitan Valentin were being fuelled by an alliance of the Vladimir authorities and the Moscow Patriarchate. The parish priest of Suzdal's Kazan Church, Fr Dmitri Ledko, and Archbishop Yevlogi (Smirnov) of Vladimir and Suzdal were the local Moscow Patriarchate representatives present at the June 2001 meeting aiming to 'sort out Valentin', thought the archbishop. While declining to confirm whether such a meeting had indeed taken place, Fr Leonid did tell Keston that there were anonymous persons in authority who wished to see Metropolitan Valentin removed, 'without them there would be no court case or publications or anything.'" <sup>527</sup>

Valentine now accepted the help of a very dubious new member of his Church, the "polittechnologist" and close associate of Putin, Gleb Pavlovsky, who had been introduced to him, coincidentally, by – Lourié! Pavlovsky stopped a programme on ORT television attacking Valentine in September, and offered to pay all the expenses of several lawyers who were employed to defend the metropolitan; they were to be supervised by Lourié and his closest associate, Olga Mitrenina. Precisely why Pavlovsky should have chosen to support the metropolitan at this time was not clear: perhaps, it was suggested, he was trying to build up "Suzdal" as a counter-weight to the MP, in order to frighten the latter and extract political concessions from it. In any case, what *was* clear was that the metropolitan's accepting the help of such a compromised figure, deeply immersed in Kremlin politics and with a history of betraying dissident enemies of the Soviet régime<sup>528</sup>, could only come at a price. It soon became clear what that price was: the relaxation of pressure on Pavlovsky's "childhood friend", Lourié, and the expulsion – by force, if necessary - of those who persisted in raising the question of Lourié's heresies. A vicious whispering campaign had already been started against Lourié's (and Pavlovsky's) main critic, the layman and editor of the internet server *Romanitas*, Anton Ter-Grigorian. He was even punched outside the church by one of Lourié's cronies, the former parliamentarian Michael Kiselev.

---

<sup>527</sup> Geraldine Fagan, "Russia - Special Report: State Persecution or Protection of Suzdal's Breakaway Orthodox?", *Keston News Service*, 12 April, 2002.

<sup>528</sup> Vladimir Bukovsky, personal communication to the present writer.

The present writer also experienced pressure in his efforts to clarify Lourié's heresies – a task that had been entrusted to him by the metropolitan himself. In May, 2001, the metropolitan invited Egor Kholmogorov to mediate between Moss and Lourié in drawing up an agreed theological statement on the issue of “name-worshipping”. When Moss rejected the statement proposed by Kholmogorov and accepted by Lourié as involving an unacceptable compromise between Orthodoxy and heresy, the metropolitan terminated the theological dialogue between Lourié and Moss.

Then, in July, he issued an ukaz appointing Moss head of a theological commission to investigate the long list of Lourié's blasphemous statements that had caused commotion in the Church – but stacked the rest of the commission with all of Lourié's closest cronies, including Lourié himself, with only one of the six members, Protopriest Michael Makeev, being of undoubted Orthodoxy. Moss refused to accept headship of a commission that would in effect allow those accused of heresy to be judges of their own case, and reminded the metropolitan of his promise that if he (Moss), after the concluding of the now-aborted theological dialogue with Lourié, were to consider Lourié's views heretical, then he (the metropolitan) would bring him to trial before the Holy Synod. The metropolitan angrily rejected any idea of bringing Lourié to account, saying that the issue of “name-worshipping” interested only a few people and would “disappear of itself”.

On September 3 Lourié conducted a press-conference in the House of the Journalist arranged by Pavlovsky, in which he fawned before the government, denying the involvement of either the state or the MP in “Osetrovschina” (though this was manifestly untrue), and spoke about “three branches” of Orthodoxy in Russia – the MP, the ROAC and the Old Believers.<sup>529</sup>

On September 5, Metropolitan Valentine was formally accused of “committing forcible acts of a sexual nature”, “compulsion to commit acts of a sexual nature” and “enticing minors into antisocial activity” under Articles 132 (part 2), 133 and 151 (part 1) respectively of the Criminal Code. His trial began on 7 February, 2002 in Suzdal District Court, but was adjourned on 13 February until August.

In October, 2001 the metropolitan made an attempt to be reconciled with Moss and Ter-Grigorian and invited them to dinner in Suzdal. However, he then proudly declared that he had been working for Christ's Church for fifty years! When Moss pointed out to him that by his own confession he had left the Catacomb Church at the age of 19 to join the MP, and that it was ROAC's official confession that the MP was a false church, which he had left only in 1990, he became angry and insisted that he had been a true priest while in the

---

<sup>529</sup> Ter-Grigorian, “Vpechatlenia ot press-konferentsii v zaschitu RPATs, proshedshej 3 sentiabria 2001 g. v Moskve, v Dome Zhurnalista”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/vpechatlenia.htm>.

MP.<sup>530</sup> In a private conversation the next day, trying to cover up the bad impression he had made the previous evening, he told Moss that Lourié was “not ours”, strongly hinting that he was KGB and that for that reason he could do nothing about him. After all, he said, Putin was replacing all the mayors in Russia by communists, and the new mayor of Suzdal was one of them...

The metropolitan then departed for America. But before leaving he accepted from Moss an open letter to the bishops and a few senior priests of ROAC listing all Lourié’s heresies and appealing for action to be taken against them. Somehow this letter got into the hands of Lourié’s associates, who created a special web-site where the open letter was “discovered” and “announced” by a certain “Sergius Lourié”, as evidence of Moss’s desire to discredit ROAC publicly - although it was precisely this website that made the matter public! Then, on November 2, Tatiana Senina, another of Lourié’s associates, created another website devoted exclusively to propaganda for the heresy of “name-worshipping”. Shortly after, on November 7, the anniversary of the revolution, Protopriest Michael Ardov published an open letter against Moss’s open letter in *Vertograd*, which, in addition to defending Lourié and “name-worshipping” publicly, made an astonishingly crude and completely slanderous attack on Ter-Grigorian, forbidding him even to enter his church in Moscow.

At this point, if the metropolitan were not to be accused of connivance with the heresy of “name-worshipping”, he *had* to renounce Ardov’s statement and close down Senina’s website. This he did not do. Indeed, since Ardov is a very cautious man, it is very unlikely that he would ever have undertaken such a step without “a nod from on high” - that is, either from the metropolitan himself, or from those who spoke in his name and by this time had effective control over him, especially Alexander Soldatov, the editor of *Vertograd*.

But now Protopriest Michael Makeev, the second priest of ROAC in Moscow, wrote to the metropolitan saying that he was very unhappy with the heresies in the Church and that he intended to send a letter to that effect to the bishops. Immediately, the metropolitan summoned a meeting in Moscow for the next day, November 15. Present were Archbishop Theodore, Archimandrite Irinarch, Protopriests Michael Ardov and Michael Makeev, Soldatov, Kholmogorov, Ter-Grigorian and others. The metropolitan told all sides to stop quarrelling and to forgive each other. He placed most of the blame for the situation on Moss, who was a “Judas” and “going along the path of Osetrov”. No rebuke was given to Lourié, Senina or Ardov. It was agreed that both *Vertograd* and *Romanitas* should remove all polemical articles from their sites - *Romanitas* complied with this order: *Vertograd* did not.

---

<sup>530</sup> A. Ter-Grigorian, “Iz Suzdalia s liuboviu”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/ziloty.htm>, November 14/27, 2003.

At a session of the ROAC Synod in December, 2001, another attempt was made to stop all discussion of the heresies.<sup>531</sup> In May, 2002 the ROAC Synod at last addressed the question of name-worshipping, only to “deliver judgement of the teaching of Hieroschemamonk Anthony Bulatovich to the competence of a Local Council of the Russian Church”. This gave the false impression that Bulatovich and his teaching had not yet been judged by the Russian Church...

On July 26, 2002, Ter-Grigorian was excommunicated “for violation of Church discipline”. Later, he was excommunicated six more times and even anathematized! On September 9, 2003, an “Official Communication of the Editors of the *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti*” declared that the reason for his excommunications was his open preaching of Nestorianism, refusal to call Christ God and the Virgin Mary – the Mother of God, a false teaching on the presence of two Persons and two Hypostases in Christ and a false teaching on the deification of Christians. Needless to say, all these accusations were completely without basis in fact.<sup>532</sup>

And so the position of ROAC at the beginning of 2002 had changed radically from a year earlier: her metropolitan was due for trial in the secular courts on the most serious of moral charges; her senior priests in Moscow and Petersburg were publicly proclaiming heresy and were not being rebuked for it; a vicious campaign of slander and intimidation against her “dissidents” was well under way; and her attitude to the Sergianism and the neo-Soviet authorities had notably softened – at least on the part of her spokesmen.<sup>533</sup>

Metropolitan Valentine and his supporters saw his trial as persecution by the MP, as part of a general trend of increasing persecution of the True Orthodox by the official Orthodox Churches. There is no doubt that the MP was interested in humiliating him, and that Osetrov's campaign against him was malicious. But there is also no doubt that he had a case to answer...

And it was in order to win much-needed friends in high places that in the autumn of 2002, just two days before the first session of the trial of Metropolitan Valentine, ROAC published an “Address to the state leadership of the Russian Federation, the organs of the international community and the rulers of the world” analogous to the “social doctrine” accepted by the MP at

---

<sup>531</sup> “Itogi Zasedania Arkhierejskogo Sinod ot 1 i 3 dekabria 2001 g.”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/itogi.htm>. See also “Uveschanie Arkhierejskogo Sinoda RPATs”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/uveshanie.htm>.

<sup>532</sup> Ter-Grigorian, “Slovo o ‘nestorianstve’ i ‘bludopoklonnoj eresi’”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/bludonestorianstvo.htm>.

<sup>533</sup> See, for example Anton Ter-Grigorian, “Izvestnie publitsisty RPATs okryto priznaiut sebia storonnikami Deklaratsii 1927 goda Sergia Stragorodskogo”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/Declaracia%20i%20RPAC.htm>; Priests Michael Makeev and Roman Pavlov, “The MP in the ROAC”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/eng/THE%20MP%20IN%20THE%20ROAC.htm>.

its “Jubilee” Sobor, in which it was written that “as in the case of the Christians of ancient Rome or the Soviet epoch, an increase in persecutions on our Church will not lead to our civil disobedience, and still less to a rebellion against the powers that be. We are ready humbly to bear any persecutions, and, to the extent that we are able, to defend our lawful rights.”<sup>534</sup> This statement of loyalty to the neo-Soviet regime, upon whose goodwill the fate of the metropolitan now depended, was supposedly signed by a long list of clergy – but many knew nothing about the declaration, and protested the inclusion of their names under such a sergianist document.

Since many clergy, and in particular the Catacomb hierarchs Archbishop Seraphim of Sukhumi and Bishop Anthony of Yaransk, were continuing to be disturbed by the teaching of Lourié and calling for his defrocking<sup>535</sup>, on October 18, at a session of the ROAC Synod he presented a “report” expressing “my deep regret regarding my public statements concerning name-worshipping, which have become a reason for discord within our Church. I hold to the teaching of the Holy Fathers and confess no heresy about the name of God, which would have been condemned by previous Fathers and Councils. I also hold to the resolutions of the All-Russian Local Council of 1917-1918, which were confirmed by two resolutions of the Synod of our Church, in accordance with which the decision on the essence of the question of name-worshipping belongs exclusively within the competence of a Local Council of the Church of Russia”.<sup>536</sup> Lourié did not mention, or repent of, any of his other heresies and blasphemies.

The craftiness of this statement is immediately evident from the fact that the All-Russian Local Council of 1917-1918 did not in fact issue any resolutions on name-worshipping – these came both earlier and later.

Further craftinesses were exposed by Protopriest Alexander Lebedev, who wrote: “Very interesting phrasing here that has to be read carefully.

“First of all, Fr. Gregory does not deny that he holds to the teaching of name-worshipping, nor does he state that he considers it to be a heresy. He has always maintained that it was not a heresy and that it was the true teaching of the Holy Fathers.

“The phrasing ‘Fathers and Sobors’ seems to neatly set aside the condemnations of the name-worshipping heresy that were made not by ‘Sobors’ – but by the Holy ‘Synod’ of the Church of Russia (and Constantinople) and by Patriarch Tikhon.

---

<sup>534</sup> <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/declaration.htm>.

<sup>535</sup> At a session of the ROAC Synod in November, 2003, it was admitted: “Yes, we know that *four* hierarchs are ready to leave the ROAC if Fr. Gregory is not deposed” (“Zhertvoprinoshenie skimna”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/zhertvoprinoshenie.htm>).

<sup>536</sup> *Vertograd*, N 312, October 21, 2002.

“His agreement with the concept that the final resolution of the question belongs solely to the competence of a Local Council of the Russian Church equally neatly puts off this final resolution almost indefinitely, as no full Local Council of the Russian Church is contemplated in the foreseeable future, perhaps decades, perhaps even longer.

“And, finally, although he states that he will himself refrain from any more public statements on this issue, he does not take any of his previous statements back or renounce them, and he does not promise to direct his followers to refrain from continuing to defend name-worshipping...”<sup>537</sup>

On October 30, the Parish Council of the Orthodox Parish of St. Michael, Guildford, England under Hieromonk Augustine (Lim) wrote a letter to the ROAC Synod asking for answers to twelve questions on the faith arising as a result of the various heresies and blasphemies of Hieromonk Gregory (Lourié).<sup>538</sup> Instead of replying, Metropolitan Valentine said that only a larger

---

<sup>537</sup> Lebedev, “[paradosis] ROAC Synod Meeting and Statement of Fr. Gregory Lourié”, [orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com), October 22, 2002.

<sup>538</sup> These twelve questions (supplemented by copious quotations from the works of the heretics) were:-

1. Does the Holy Synod consider Fr. Gregory Lourié’s book, *The Calling of Abraham*, to be completely Orthodox, or does it accept, in accordance with the views of *Marriage, Grace and the Law*, which was published with the blessing of Metropolitan Valentine, that it contains heresy, specifically the heresy that only virgins and monastics, and not married people, can be New Testament Christians?
2. Does the Holy Synod not condemn the teaching of Fr. Gregory Lourié and Tatiana Senina that the Holy Synod of the Russian Church fell into heresy – specifically, the heresies of ‘Barlaamism’ and ‘Name-fighting’ – before the revolution? Does it not condemn their opinion that all those who opposed the teaching of Fr. Anthony Bulatovich, including Patriarch Tikhon, were ‘name-fighting’ heretics?
3. Does the Holy Synod not agree with Patriarch Tikhon’s condemnation of the teaching of Bulatovich, *which decree has never been repealed*, and does it not agree that it is necessary that Fr. Gregory, following Patriarch Tikhon and his Holy Synod, must specifically condemn the teaching of Bulatovich?
4. Does the Holy Synod not agree that the Christian Empire was not an Old Testament, but a New Testament institution, and that it did not have to ‘abolish itself’ immediately St. Constantine accepted the New Testament [as Fr. Gregory Lourié teaches]?
5. Does the Holy Synod not condemn Fr. Theophan [Areskin]’s teaching that the hierarchy of the New Testament Church is in fact the hierarchy of the Old Testament Church, ‘according to the order of Aaron’?
6. Does the Holy Synod not agree that, contrary to the teaching of Fr. Gregory, the Russian Church did *not* fall into ecclesiological heresy, specifically the heresy of Sergianism, before the revolution?
7. Does the Holy Synod not agree that the teaching of Fr. Gregory’s disciple, Tatiana Senina, that all the pastors and believers of the Russian Church would have suffered eternal damnation as heretics if the revolution had not come, is false and an insult to the holy new martyrs?
8. Does the Holy Synod not condemn Fr. Gregory’s participation in, and expressed admiration for, rock culture, and in particular its culture of death and suicide?



Synod or the Tsar himself could compel him to reply! Lourié was allowed to present his defence in a "report" to the metropolitan, which drew no comment or criticism from the Synod.<sup>539</sup>

In December, having received no answer to their questions, and seeing that the metropolitan was determined to defend the heretics, who now had complete control of all the official organs of ROAC, the Parish of St. Michael left ROAC. Nine months later, when the Parish was already in another jurisdiction, the metropolitan declared that Fr. Augustine had been banned from serving, and that the present writer was excommunicated because of his supposed opposition to monasticism, which was influenced, according to the metropolitan, by the Jewish Cabbala!<sup>540</sup> The latter false accusation is more than a little curious in that Fr. Gregory Lourié is a direct descendant of the foremost cabbalist of sixteenth-century Europe, Isaak Lourié Levi, and a Jewish influence in his heresies has been suspected...

In July, 2003 the ROAC Synod declared in an epistle: "The old 'Christian world' has gone, never to return, and that which is frenziedly desired by some, the regeneration of the 'Orthodox monarchy' in some country, in which the true faith will reign, must be considered a senseless utopia."

This epistle was almost certainly written by Fr. Gregory Lourié. However, it was signed, according to *Vertograd* for July 30, by the bishops: Valentine, Theodore, Seraphim, Irinarch and Ambrose. Therefore unless *Vertograd* is lying and one or more of these signatures were forged - which is quite possible, since Archbishop Seraphim in particular has said that he never signed certain synodal decrees on name-worshipping which he is quoted by *Vertograd* as having signed, - then we must conclude that the ROAC has officially rejected the hope of all truly Orthodox Christians in the resurrection

- 
9. Does the Holy Synod not agree that the Nietzschean ideas expressed by Fr. Gregory concerning the impossibility of obeying God and his denigration of the Christian idea of Paradise in favour of the Muslim idea, are worthy of anathema?
  10. Does the Holy Synod not agree that the saints are *not* the primary sources of the teaching of the Church, since Christ Himself, the Truth Incarnate, said: 'My teaching is not Mine own, but the teaching of Him Who sent Me?' (*John* 7.16)?
  11. Does the Holy Synod not agree that public expressions of admiration for the greatest persecutor of the faith in Christian history [Stalin] do not befit an Orthodox Christian, and still less an Orthodox priest?
  12. Does the Holy Synod not condemn Fr. Gregory's blasphemous comparison of the tears of Christ to going to the toilet, which were spoken as if he does not really believe in the God-man at all? (Full text in both English and Russian at "Obraschenie k Sviaschennomu Sinodu Rossijskoj Pravoslavnoj Avtonomnoj Tserkvi Tserkovnogo Soveta Obschiny sv. Arkhangel Mikhaila v Gilforde", <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/Obrash.htm>).

<sup>539</sup> *Vertograd*, N 322, November 15, 2002.

<sup>540</sup> Ter-Grigorian, "Kuriezny: Ierom. Grigorij (Lourié) obviniaet Vladimira Mossa v priverzhennosti drevneevrejskoj Kabbale", <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/Kabbala.htm>; "Slovo o 'nestorianstve' i 'bludopoklonnoj eresi'", <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/bludonestorianstvo.htm>.

of Orthodoxy under an Orthodox Emperor, and in particular the resurrection of Russian Orthodoxy under a Russian Tsar. According to it, the faith and hope of many, many saints and martyrs is a “senseless utopia”, an object of “frenzied” desire that cannot possibly be fulfilled and must be renounced!<sup>541</sup>

In August, 2003, the metropolitan was convicted of paedophilia by the court, and given a conditional four-year prison sentence. The sentence was upheld by the appeal court in the autumn. But in March, 2004 his conviction was expunged. Although there had been no new evidence, and no new trial, *Vertograd* immediately trumpeted this as an acquittal. However, one of the lawyers of the metropolitan himself contradicted *Vertograd*, saying that this legal whitewash was based on the metropolitan’s private acknowledgement of his guilt – and would be removed immediately if he “misbehaved” again...

Opposition to the heretics continued, but in November, 2003 the ROAC Synod was able to silence its critics in a clever way: both Fr. Gregory Lourié and one of his principal opponents, Fr. Roman Pavlov, were “retired”. No matter that de facto this meant that Fr. Roman was able to serve only with the explicit permission of the metropolitan, while Fr. Gregory’s activities and serving were in no way hindered or diminished. From now on, the ROAC was not responsible for Lourié because he had supposedly been “retired” ...<sup>542</sup>

Early in 2004 two priests (Protopriest Michael Makeev and Fr. Roman Pavlov) and a parish of ROAC in Moscow, which included the seven-times excommunicated and anathematised Anton Ter-Grigorian, left ROAC. They joined the True Orthodox Church of Cyprus under Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kition. It is reported that many Catacomb Church parishioners were also leaving ROAC at this time...

In March, 2004, the name-worshippers Yegor Kholmogorov and Fr. Gregory Lourié demonstrated that they deviated from True Orthodox teaching in another important way. According to *Vertograd*, they “publicly recognized themselves to be supporters of the Declaration of Sergius Stragorodsky of 1927, distinguishing, from their point of view, the Declaration of Sergius Stragorodsky from ‘sergianism as such’. Yegor Kholmogorov declared the following: ‘The position expressed in the Declaration by the formula [there follows a long quotation from the Declaration, including the most contentious passage about “our sorrows and joys”] seems to me to be absolutely just and faithful to the church-political position in those conditions.’

---

<sup>541</sup> Ter-Grigorian, “Vladimir Moss ob uprazhnenii v RPATs Very Sviatykh Novomuchenikov otnositel’no vosstanovlenia Rossii”, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/V1%20Moss%20O%20poslanii.htm>.

<sup>542</sup> Ter-Grigorian, <http://www.romanitas.ru/Actual/zhertvoprinoshenie.htm>.



“Later, Ye. Kholmogorov declared the following: ‘Thus if one considers that sergianism is the recognition of Soviet power as the civil authority in Russia, an authority that could aid the strengthening of lawfulness, the flourishing of the country, etc., then sergianism is undoubtedly a justified church position and there is nothing for which to reproach Metropolitan Sergius.’

“Besides this, Comrade Kholmogorov affirms that Holy Hieromartyr Joseph of Petrograd held to the principles reflected in Sergius’ Declaration on loyalty to the Bolsheviks. While on ROCOR and the Catacomb Church he writes the following: ‘... It is completely incomprehensible why the position of the Orthodox Christian should be that of the political partisan. To justify this political partisanship, both in ROCOR and in the catacombs, completely made, absolutely heretical theories were created that turned a certain part of the catacombniks into a new edition of the Priestless Old Ritualists with their “spiritual antichrist”...’

“Hieromonk Gregory (Lourie) completely agreed with him and declared the following: ‘Yes, it’s something like that. Especially important is the distinguishing between the Declaration and sergianism as such.’

“In his time the chief ideologue of ROAC and the chief editor of Portal Credo.ru, Alexander Soldatov, expressed himself on the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky). In an editorial article for Credo.ru dated September 8, 2003 he referred to Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) as on a par with ‘the great hierarchs of the epoch of the Ecumenical Councils’, while the word ‘sergianism’ he put in inverted commas.

“Earlier, from very many judgements of comrades Kholmogorov, Soldatov and Lourie it followed that they consider sergianism to be an insignificant canonical transgression. But now they speak about it openly...”<sup>543</sup>

In July, 2005 Archbishop Anthony of Yaransk met Fr. Victor Melehov, who had been expelled from ROCOR (V), in Dmitrov. As a result of their meeting, at which the heresies of Lourié were discussed, Archbishop Anthony blessed Fr. Victor to commemorate him alone at the Liturgy. When Archbishop Anthony arrived in Suzdal, Metropolitan Valentine secured the banning of the American priests for creating a faction (Fr. Christopher Johnson was banned for trying to become a bishop!<sup>544</sup>). However, Archbishop Anthony,

---

<sup>543</sup> “Ideologi RPATs Priznaiut Sebia Sergianami”, <http://www.vertograd.ru/txt/04/03/428b.html>.

<sup>544</sup> Joseph Suiaden writes: “Metropolitan Valentine stated at the Ipswich parish that there were originally four candidates that he was going to consecrate before making a “diaspora Metropolia” (a restored ROCOR?): Archimandrite Michael (Graves), Fr Christopher Johnson, Archimandrite Andrei (Maklakov), and Archimandrite Ephraim (Bertolette). I was specifically told by none other than Fr Spyridon that “there are four men he (Metropolitan

supported by the Catacomb Bishops Gerontius and Hilarion from the Ukraine, secured the banning of Lourié and the setting up of a commission to investigate “the matter of Fr. Gregory Lourié”.

On September 5, Lourié, 2005 was defrocked – without a trial - by the Synod.<sup>545</sup> The heretic had at length been removed. But the uncanonical manner in which it had been done allowed the heretic to paint himself as a victim. Soon he managed to detach two bishops (Sebastian of the Urals and Ambrose of Khabarovsk) from the ROAC Synod. They soon consecrated him “Bishop of St. Petersburg and Gdov” and made him leader of their group. As Lourié’s influence has waxed, - he now poses as a focus of unity of the different True Orthodox jurisdictions, - so that of Metropolitan Valentine has waned. The only hope for members of ROAC would seem to reside in coming under the omophorion of the only remaining canonical branch of the Russian Church, RTOC under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia...

### VII. The End-Game

All this time ROCOR (L) was coming inexorably closer to official union with the MP... In May, 2003 it declared that it and the MP mutually recognised each other’s sacraments, which was followed by cases of de facto concelebration.<sup>546</sup> And yet, if the Moscow Patriarchate now recognized the sacraments of ROCOR (L), it had a strange way of expressing it. In 2003, a book published by the Moscow Patriarchate called *Strazh Doma Gospodnia* (*The Guardian of the House of the Lord*) not only justified the official Church's capitulation to the Soviet regime, but also condemned the confessors in the Catacomb Church and ROCOR who did not capitulate. True, the author, Sergius Fomin, did make the startling admission: “If Metropolitan Sergius, in agreeing in his name to publish the Declaration of 1927 composed by the authorities, hoping to buy some relief for the Church and the clergy, then *his hopes not only were not fulfilled, but the persecutions after 1927 became still fiercer, reaching truly hurricane-force in 1937-38*” (p. 262). But the book as a whole sought to justify Sergius. Moreover, the foreword, which was written by Patriarch Alexis, praised the heroic path taken by Sergius and viciously castigated his critics. Those that did not follow Sergius in his submission to

---

Valentine) wants to make Bishops. We need our man (Fr Christopher) in first” (personal communication, March 31, 2011).

<sup>545</sup> *Vertograd*, N 532, August 2, 2005, pp. 1-2; N 533, August 7, 2005, pp. 1-2. Joseph Suaiden writes: “Lourie was in fact called to trial. In fact, he was pretending to ignore the period of suspension and parish representatives were claiming he had never been present to receive the suspension for two weeks. In fact, I know that one ROAC member had gone to the parish and saw Lourie serving during that period. When Lourie realized he had been “caught”, he announced that afternoon that he had been suspended. He then disappeared for a number of weeks, and had placed a picture of himself in Western Europe on his website, implying he would not be served for trial, his whereabouts unknown until after the deposition.” (personal communication, March 31, 2011).

<sup>546</sup> “Puti apostasii RPTs(L)”, <http://www.russia-talk.com/otkliki/ot-308.htm>.

Stalin were "schismatics", who, "not having reconciled themselves to the new government, became a danger just as big as the persecutions." Sergius, on the other hand, received only words of praise, and was credited with averting, "maybe even the destruction of the Russian Orthodox Church itself."

In November, 2003 a delegation to Moscow led by Archbishop Mark kissed the patriarch's hand and asked forgiveness for any harsh things ROCOR may have said about the MP in the past. Since a great deal had been said in the past, and by all the leaders of ROCOR, such an apology could only be interpreted as capitulation to the MP. Again, on January 26, 2004, Archbishop Mark said in answer to a question about the canonical status of the Moscow Patriarchate: "The Russian people has made its choice. It has recognized the present Russian Orthodox Church in Russia and its hierarchy. We must take account of this in spite of possible objections from members of the Church Abroad. At the beginning of the 1990s we still could not see the processes that were happening in Russia as the people there saw them. Life in Russia went by a different path from how the émigrés presented it..."<sup>547</sup>

In May, 2004 Metropolitan Laurus headed another ROCOR delegation on a two-week visit to Russia. On May 15, the anniversary of "Patriarch" Sergius' death, Patriarch Alexis demonstratively served a pannikhida for the traitor-patriarch, after which he said: "May the Lord create for him eternal and grateful memory". Then, during a liturgy at the Butovo polygon, where thousands of Christians, both True Orthodox and sergianist, were killed and buried<sup>548</sup>, he had this to say to his foreign guests: "Today is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the death of the ever-memorable Patriarch Sergius. The time of the service of this archpastor coincided with the most terrible years of the struggle against God, when it was necessary to preserve the Russian Church. In those terrible years of repression and persecutions there were more sorrows. In 1937 both those who shared the position of Metropolitan Sergius and those who did not agree with him suffered for the faith of Christ, for belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church. We pay a tribute of respect and thankful remembrance to his Holiness Patriarch Sergius for the fact that he, in the most terrible and difficult of conditions of the Church's existence in the 1930s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led the ship of the Church and preserved the Russian Church amidst the stormy waves of the sea of life."<sup>549</sup>

The idea that those who shared Sergius' position and those who rejected it were equally martyrs is to mock the very idea of martyrdom for the truth. Clearly, therefore, "Patriarch" Alexis, "forgetting" historical facts as accepted even by MP historians, was determined to justify even the most shameful acts

---

<sup>547</sup> P. Budzilovich, "K 60-letiu 'Velikoj Pobedy'", <http://www.russia-talk.com/rf/60-let.htm>.

<sup>548</sup> More precisely, 20,765 people were executed and buried in Butovo between August 8, 1937 and October 19, 1938 (*Orthodox News*, vol. 17, N 4, Summer, 2004, p. 1).

<sup>549</sup> Ridiger, in A. Soldatov, "Sergij premudrij nam put' ozaril", *Vertograd*, N 461, 21 May, 2004, p. 4.

of the “ever-memorable” Sergius, claiming that he truly “saved the Church” by his agreements with the God-haters. There could be no doubt, therefore, that he remained a dyed-in-the-wool sergianist. And there could similarly be no doubt that Metropolitan Laurus, in listening to this speech in respectful silence and without interjecting the slightest objection, was a sergianist, too.

The conclusions of the first two sessions of the joint commissions of the MP and ROCOR (in June and September, 2004) were approved in the autumn by the MP Council of Bishops, although very few details were made public. However, on November 1 Patriarch Alexis revealed something, which was published by “Yedinoe otechestvo” under the intriguing title: “Wishing a speedy union with ROCOR, Alexis II emphasises that it is wrong to judge Metropolitan Sergius and his actions”. The patriarch was reported as saying: “Two working meetings of the commission of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad on the dialogue over the re-establishment of ecclesiastical unity took place, and the projects of the following documents were agreed: on the relationships between the Church and the State, on the relationships between Orthodoxy and the heterodox communities and the inter-confessional organization, and on the canonical status of ROCOR as a self-governing Church.” In other words, all the important issues have already been agreed! But what was the agreement? And if it is in accordance with Orthodoxy, why was it not being published?<sup>550</sup>

While every attempt was made to pretend that the MP and ROCOR were negotiating on equal terms, many facts indicated the opposite. Thus when Fr. Constantine Kaunov left the Volgograd diocese of the MP and joined the Siberian diocese of ROCOR under Bishop Eutyches, and was banned from serving by the MP Bishop of Ekaterinburg (under whom he had never served), he was told by Bishop Eutyches that he was banned because he had not submitted to the ban of the MP bishop! In other words, already now, before full, official union, ROCOR priests in Russia were under the power of the MP – with the full connivance of the ROCOR bishops!<sup>551</sup>

On January 24, 2005 Metropolitan Cyril (Gundiaev) of Smolensk, head of the MP’s Department of Foreign Relations and the future patriarch, confirmed that the MP did not condemn Sergianism: “We recognize that the model of Church-State relations [in the Soviet period] did not correspond to tradition. But we are not condemning those who realized this model, because there was no other way of preserving the Church. The Church behaved in the only way

---

<sup>550</sup> “Chto ‘soglasovano’ sovместnaia komissia MP i RPTs (L)” (What the Joint Commission of the MP and the ROCOR (L) Agreed Upon), <http://www.russia-talk.com/otklike/ot-402.htm>, 3 November, 2004.

<sup>551</sup> “V Omsko-Sibirskuiu Eparkhiu RIPTs pereshli dve kliriki RPTsZ (L)” (Two Clergy of the ROCOR (L) Joined the Omsk Diocese of the RTOC), <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=633>.

she could at that time. There was another path into the catacombs, but there could be no catacombs in the Soviet space..."<sup>552</sup>

But there *were many* "catacombs in the Soviet space". And it was precisely the existence of those catacombs, and of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of the Catacomb Church, that gave the lie to the MP's assertion that there was no other way. That other way was the way of Christ, Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life – and for the true Christian there was no other Way!<sup>553</sup>

Meanwhile, Patriarch Alexis officially endorsed the communist view of the Second World War. In February, 2005, there was a "Worldwide Russian People's Council" in Moscow, to which several guests from ROCOR (L) were invited. As Laurence A. Uzzell, president of International Religious Freedom Watch wrote for *The Moscow Times*: "The speeches at that gathering, devoted to celebrating the Soviet victory in World War II and linking it to the Kremlin's current policies, suggest that the domestic church [the MP] is counting on Russian nationalism to woo the émigrés. Especially striking is the distinctively Soviet flavor of that nationalism. The main speeches failed to mention the victory's dark sides, for example the imposition of totalitarian atheism on traditionally Christian societies such as Romania and Bulgaria. Patriarch Alexey II made the incredible statement that the victory 'brought the Orthodox peoples of Europe closer and raised the authority of the Russian Church'. If one had no information, one would think that the establishment of Communist Party governments in the newly conquered countries were purely voluntary – and that what followed was unfettered religious freedom..."<sup>554</sup>

Uzzell continues: "Sergianism is clearly still thriving, despite the Moscow Patriarchate's occasional abstract statements asserting its right to criticize the state. The Patriarchate's leaders still openly celebrate Patriarch Sergei's memory, with some even favoring his canonization as a saint. With rare exceptions, they still issue commentaries on President Vladimir Putin's policies, which read like government press releases. They seem sure that this

---

<sup>552</sup> Gundiaev, in *Vertograd-Inform*, N 504, February 2, 2005.

<sup>553</sup> When Gundiaev became patriarch, his place as head of the Department for External Relations was taken by Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), who made this startling revelation to the American ambassador in Russia, as revealed by Wikileaks: "A (or the) main role of the Russian Orthodox Church is in providing propaganda for the official politics of the government" ("Otkrovenie Tovarisha Alfeyeva" (A Revelation of Comrade Alfeyev), *Nasha Strana* (Buenos Aires), N 2907, January, 2010, p. 4)

<sup>554</sup> Uzzell, "Reaching for Religious Reunion", *Moscow Times*, March 31, 2005, p. 8; *Tserkovnie Novosti* (Church News), May, 2005. Again, in May, 2005, he wrote a congratulatory epistle to the president of Vietnam on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the communist victory in the Vietnam War. He called it a "glorious anniversary" and said that it opened up new horizons for the Vietnamese people ([http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/features/2007/01/04/feature-02](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2007/01/04/feature-02)). Similar letters were sent to the leaders of North Korea and Cuba.

issue will not be a deal-breaker in their quest for reunion with the émigrés. Putin's Kremlin will be hoping that they are right."<sup>555</sup>

Matushka Anastasia Shatilova noted: "In the Moscow Patriarchate there can be observed an elemental striving towards the 'glorification' of a series of very dubious personalities, including Ivan the Terrible (seven times married, who killed his own son and sent Maliuta Skuratov to suffocate the holy Hierarch Philip of Moscow for his rebuking of the Tsar's cruelties) and Rasputin (whose 'icons' are even streaming myrrh). The crown of all this is the 'icon' of Stalin, which was put on the "Live Journal" on the internet on June 5. On it this outcast of the human race is portrayed in hierarchical vestments with an omophorion, a Gospel book and a sword in his hands!"<sup>556</sup>

In June, 2005 four documents agreed by the joint MP-ROCOR commissions were published – on the same day that a delegation from the WCC visited the patriarch in Moscow! These documents contained a more or less complete submission to Moscow's commands, including even a justification of Sergius' declaration.

On November 22, 2005 (old style) the Cyprianites, who, while accepting that the MP had grace, still opposed union with it, broke communion with ROCOR (L). In December, 2005 the Hierarchical Synod of ROCOR (L) broke communion with the Cyprianites. The real reason was that the MP had laid it down as a condition for the union of the MP with ROCOR that ROCOR "regulates its relations with groups that have separated from their Local Churches" (Protopriest Nicholas Balashov).

In May a so-called "Fourth All-Diaspora Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad" was convened by ROCOR (L) in San Francisco. By dint of a great deal of manipulation and the weeding out of dissenters, the Sobor endorsed the union with the MP. Nevertheless, the dissenters who were able to speak at the Sobor were still able to make some telling points, especially about the continuing ecumenism of the MP.

Thus in his report to the Sobor Priest Victor Dobrov said: "Just recently, from February 14-23 of this year in Porto Alegre, Brazil the regular 9<sup>th</sup> ecumenical Assembly of the WCC took place.

"The Russian Church (MP) at this Assembly was unusually imposing with more than 20 members in its delegation.

"The Summary Document, adopted and ratified by the participants of this ecumenical Assembly, and particularly by the Moscow Patriarchate in the

---

<sup>555</sup> Uzzell, *op. cit.*

<sup>556</sup> *Tserkovnie Novosti (Church News)*, June, 2005.



face of its representatives, is the Document PRC 01.1 entitled "The Teaching on the Church: Called to be a United Church".

"A careful study of this Document casts doubt on the multitude of statements made by the representatives of the Moscow side, that the objective of the continued membership of the Patriarchate in the WCC is the uncompromising witnessing to the Truth to the heterodox world. Moreover, this document evokes doubt in the Orthodoxy of the confession of the faith of the Moscow Patriarchate itself. The entire adopted Document is heretical from beginning to end, but because of the lack of time for a thorough examination, we will focus only on the most glaring evidence.

"Let us refer to the text of the Document:

"One may call the following assertion in the Document a theological breakthrough, yet it is far from Orthodox thinking:

""All who have been baptized into Christ are united with Christ in his body'. (III, 8) (*i.e. in the Church of Christ!*)

"It is completely unequivocal, simple and comprehensible! Since nowhere in the remainder of the Document is it stated that this implies baptism with the obligatory participation of the one being baptized in the Eucharist which is in the Orthodox Church, therefore now there is every basis to consider the Moscow Patriarchate as already being of one body with Protestants...

"Our Orthodox consciousness is amazed and startled by the ecumenical statement adopted by the Moscow Patriarchate on recognizing the grace and genuineness of baptisms carried out in heretical communities!"<sup>557</sup>

The Council declared: "Hearing the lectures read at the Council, the reports made by the Commission on negotiations with the corresponding Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the various points of view expressed during the discussions, we express our conciliar consent that it is necessary to confirm the canonical status of the Russian Church Abroad for the future as a self-governing part of the Local Russian Church, in accordance with the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia currently in force."

A kind of autonomy of ROCOR within MP was granted her – but it was only a fig-leaf to hide her complete submission. The Patriarch still retained veto power on appointments, the Orthodox Church of America remained outside ROCOR's control, and, most important, full communion with the "Local Russian Church", i.e. the Moscow Patriarchate, was established.

---

<sup>557</sup> Dobrov, [http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print\\_page&pid=913](http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=913).

The declaration went on: "From discussions at the Council it is apparent that the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches evokes confusion among our clergy and flock. With heartfelt pain we ask the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to heed the plea of our flock to expediently remove this temptation.

"We hope that the forthcoming Local Council of the One Russian Church will settle remaining unresolved church problems."

This rather pathetic appeal to the conquerors to heed the "heartfelt pain" of the vanquished was swept aside. Since the union between the MP and ROCOR, the ecumenist activities of "the One Russian Church" has actually increased, especially since the enthronement of Patriarch Cyril. In any case, since ROCOR did not lay down the renunciation of ecumenism as a sine qua non of union, and only asked that the "remaining unresolved church problems" be settled "at the forthcoming Local Council of the One Russian Church", that is, *after* union, there was no real pressure placed on the MP: ROCOR had surrendered...

Protests continued to the very end. Thus former KGB Lieutenant-Colonel Constantine Preobrazhensky reminded the ROCOR faithful of what they already knew but had begun to forget: "*Absolutely all* [my italics - V.M.] the bishops and the overwhelming majority of the priests [of the MP] worked with the KGB..."<sup>558</sup> And very near the end, in February, 2007, Fr. Nikita Grigoriev, an instructor at Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville, produced one of the most incisive exposés of the Moscow Patriarchate in the whole history of its existence.<sup>559</sup>

But in vain. On May 17, 2007, deceived by the vain hope of retaining some kind of real autonomy within the MP, and suppressing the unassailable evidence that the MP was still sergianist and ecumenist to the core, Metropolitan Laurus signed the union with the KGB-Patriarch while the KGB-President beamed approvingly... The Russian Church Abroad, the last free voice of the True Russian Church, had ceased to exist.

Or so it seemed...

### Conclusion

*And the Lord said to satan: the Lord rebuke thee, O satan, the Lord rebuke thee  
Who hast chosen Jerusalem! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?  
Zachariah 3.2.*

---

<sup>558</sup> Preobrazhensky, *KGB v russkoj emigratsii*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>559</sup> Grigoriev, "Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, The Beacon of Light (Revised)", [orthodox-synod@yahoogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-synod@yahoogroups.com), February 24, 2007.



As the wise Solomon says, pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16.18). The fall of ROCOR was the result of pride – pride in her own past virtues, and pride in relation to the other bearers of True Russian Orthodoxy. This is not to say that the achievements of ROCOR were not genuinely great. Apart from providing spiritual food for her own large flock scattered over every continent, and bringing many foreigners to the light of the true faith, she faithfully preserved the traditions of the pre-revolutionary Russian Church that were being destroyed with the utmost ruthlessness in the Homeland, while providing a voice (and, in some cases, an omophorion) for the catacomb confessors. Several of her conciliar declarations – the condemnation of sergianism (1928), the glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors (1981) and the anathema against ecumenism (1983) – will stand forever as monuments of the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Probably her greatest long-term achievement was that accomplished when she was almost at the end of her strength: her creation of parishes inside Russia in 1990, and her resurrection of the apostolic succession and hierarchy of her sister-church in the Homeland, the Russian True Orthodox Church. Paradoxically, however, it was this final achievement that brought about her downfall; for the task of replacing the Moscow Patriarchate as the dominant confession in Russia was beyond her strength, and the spiritual diseases and temptations transmitted through the first face-to-face encounter with the old enemy in the Homeland since the 1920s shook her faith and determination. Forgetting their duty before God and their flock both in Russia and abroad, the majority of the hierarchs wavered, began to listen to the siren-calls of pseudo-Russian Soviet nationalism, and fell into a false union with the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate and apostate World Orthodoxy.

This is without doubt a profound spiritual tragedy whose consequences are still reverberating among the Orthodox all over the world. However, “all things work for the best for those who love God” (Romans 8.28), and “the Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble” (Proverbs 16.4). So even in this terrible tragedy there is hidden the hope and the means of spiritual healing and resurrection – ROCOR’s fall by no means excludes the possibility of a recovery. But that recovery must now come primarily from within Russia, and not from abroad, especially since 95% of ROCOR *inside* Russia refused to join the unia with the MP as opposed to 30 % outside Russia.<sup>560</sup> And it must come with a full understanding of the causes of the past failures, and a determination not to repeat them.

---

<sup>560</sup> Fr. Alexis Lebedev, “Ottenki krasnogo” (Shades of Red), <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=comment&id=1874>; <http://www.karlovtchanin.eu/sobitia/492-4>. Deacon Joseph Suaiden writes: “The ‘unionists’ in ROCOR saw approximately 10-15% of its parishes depart with Metropolitan Vitaly from 2001-2003 and approximately (according to the earliest reports) 33% of its parishes lost to Archbishop (now Metropolitan) Agafangel after the 2007 union with the Moscow Patriarchate.” (<http://news-nftu.blogspot.com/2012/01/four-months-before-rocor-mps-5th.html>)

What are the lessons from this tragedy? Briefly, they are: that Soviet power is not from God, but from the devil, and that neither with it, nor with its neo-Soviet successor under KGB agent Putin, is any “symphony of powers” possible; that the Moscow Patriarchate, having sold its soul to the devil in the form of Stalin in the 1920s and not repented of it even after the fall of communism, does not have the grace of sacraments and is no longer an ark of salvation; that ecumenism is “the heresy of heresies”, and union with the ecumenist churches in the World Council of Churches or other ecumenical forums is spiritual death; and that the unity of the Russian people cannot be bought at the expense of the betrayal of God and of the confession of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.

A further lesson, of a less dogmatic nature but still important, is that the leadership of the Russian Church has now passed from Abroad back to the Homeland. In a sense, this was inevitable, both from a historical and from a canonical point of view. In her early years, the Russian émigrés were always looking to return to the Homeland; they felt themselves and their Church to be truly “in exile”, and the purpose of their lives to be the resurrection of true piety and the True Church in the Homeland. The hope of this resurrection grew fainter with time, but the primacy in the hearts of the exiles of the Church in the Homeland, of which the Church Abroad was merely a part (and rather a small part - merely “a drop in the ocean” in the words of St. Philaret of New York), remained. It was therefore entirely natural that the return of the Church Abroad to Russia in 1990 should be seen as the culmination of her existence, and the struggle with the MP that ensued as “the last battle”.

But from a canonical point of view the whole existence of ROCOR was highly anomalous. A part of the Russian Church that existed outside Russia, throughout the world, and in many places on the territories of other Local Churches, but as an autonomous, self-governing unit - this was an unprecedented phenomenon in Orthodox Church history. Strictly speaking, the existence of such a global, “floating” Church body contradicted the basic territorial principle of Church administration. It could be justified only on the grounds that to merge with the other Local Churches, and still more with the official Church in the Homeland, would be to the detriment of the Orthodox Faith and the spiritual welfare of its flock. This justification was seen as adequate by all zealots of the faith, both Russian and non-Russian - and yet the situation of the Church remained anomalous, and therefore necessarily temporary, requiring a canonical resolution sooner or later. Moreover, the anomaly became still more extreme when the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia became - contrary to the first paragraph of its own *Statute* - also the Russian Orthodox Church *Inside* Russia in 1990. How could the Church *Outside* Russia be at the same time the Church *Inside* Russia?!

---

The anomaly could be resolved only by transferring the central authority of the Church from Abroad to the Homeland. Such a solution had many obvious and major advantages, whereas keeping the administration of the Church in the hands of hierarchs living thousands of miles away with no knowledge of the conditions in contemporary Russia was a recipe for disaster. This was at least partially recognized by Metropolitan Vitaly himself, when he declared in December, 2001: "After many long, hard years of trying to manage the Church in Russia from New York, I have learned that it is impossible to manage the Church in Russia from Abroad. We do not know and understand their problems and we do not know their people and possible candidates for the clergy. Without a knowledge of their people and their problems the best that we can do is give them Apostolic Succession and Grace and allow them to organize while maintaining communion with them and praying that they will be able to do something for themselves..."

And yet the leadership of ROCOR (V) strenuously resisted bestowing any such autonomy on ROCOR inside Russia, let alone giving the leadership of the Russian Church as a whole to hierarchs inside Russia; and this prideful insistence that the Russian Church can only be governed from Mansonville or Paris must be considered as the main reason for the fall of ROCOR (V).

However, the fall of ROCOR (V), and the emergence of RTOC under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia as the only truly canonical Russian Church jurisdiction, has now solved the problem. The leadership of RTOC always insisted that the Russian Church Abroad and the Catacomb or Russian True Orthodox Church should be seen as separate but closely related organisms, "sister-churches". Even when under extreme provocation, they tried hard not to break the link with Metropolitan Vitaly. But once ROCOR (V) had definitely fallen away, they created a Church structure that was the mirror-image of the old ROCOR. That is, the central leadership of the Church was now permanently *inside* Russia, while the Church Abroad existed as a semi-autonomous body with its own bishop(s) in communion with the main body inside Russia.

This "ecclesiastical perestroika" had its critics, however, even within RTOC and even within that remnant of ROCOR – about a third of the parishes worldwide – who refused to accept the unia with Moscow. They gathered around the figure of Bishop Agathangelus of Odessa, the only bishop in ROCOR (L) who rejected the unia, and who now proclaimed himself the sole lawful successor-bishop of the old ROCOR. While continuing to live in the Ukraine, he declared that the centre of the Church was still Abroad, and has recently been given the title "Metropolitan of New York".

We have met Bishop Agathangelus before, as the hierarch who, in October, 2001, betrayed his spiritual father and RTOC and "jumped ship", joining

Laurus at just the moment that Laurus fell away from the faith. Little good should have been expected from such a turncoat, and so it turned out. Only three days after the May, 2007, ROCOR sent an appeal to Agathangelus to unite with them<sup>561</sup>. But Agathangelus rejected it. In fact, he not only refused to join any of the existing “splinters” (*oskolki*) that had been saved from the shipwreck of ROCOR: he vigorously claimed that they were all schismatics, that the Lavrite Synod had been the only true Russian Synod until its fall in May, 2007, and even that all the decisions of the Lavrite Synod until that date were valid and correct – including, presumably, all the decisions of the false Council of 2000 and the decision to seek union with the MP!

Agathangelus now proceeded to repeat all the errors of the 1990s that had undermined the strength of ROCOR in the 1990s, beginning with the union with the Cyprianites and the acceptance of their ecclesiology. Thus in November, 2007 he entered into communion with Metropolitan Cyprian and his Synod. The Cyprianites claimed that there had never been a break in communion between them and Bishop Agathangelus, but this was not true, since the Lavrite Synod, of which Bishop Agathangelus was then a member, broke communion with the Cyprianites in 2006. Then, early in December, Bishop Agathangelus consecrated two further bishops for his jurisdiction with the help of the Cyprianite Bishops Ambrose of Methone and George of Alania (South Ossetia) in Odessa: Andronik (Kotliarov) for New York, and Sophrony (Musienko) for St. Petersburg. So the “Agathangelite” Synod, thanks to the Cyprianites, now has three dioceses: one each for the Ukraine, Russia and North America.

Some hailed this expansion of the Agathangelite Synod as “the resurrection of ROCOR”. Did this title correspond to the truth about the Agathangelite Synod? It would have corresponded to the truth only if: (1) the confession of faith of this Synod were purely Orthodox, (2) its apostolic succession were undoubted, and (3) it were the only Synod that could reasonably argue that it was “the continuer of ROCOR”. But the Agathangelite Synod failed to pass this test on all three counts.

**1. The Confession of the Agathangelite Synod is not purely Orthodox.** The present writer asked the Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone: “Can we take it that Bishop Agathangelus shares your ecclesiology in all respects? In particular, does he, like your Synod, regard the Moscow Patriarchate as having grace?” His reply (the bishop was speaking only in his own name, not for the whole Cyprianite Synod) was: “*So far as I know, and so far as I have discussed [it] with him, yes.*” We can assume that this was a correct answer, because the Cyprianites and the Agathangelites have remained in communion to the present day without any quarrels over the faith.

---

<sup>561</sup> <http://karlovchanin.livejournal.com/34406.html>.

In other words, Bishop Agathangelus recognized the Moscow Patriarchate and the whole of World Orthodoxy to be grace-filled. Moreover, he embraced the false Cyprianite ecclesiology that heretics such as Patriarchs Alexis and Bartholomew were “sick” members of the True Church. The immediate reaction was: had Agathangelus learned nothing from the fall of Metropolitan Laurus? Or rather, did he consider it a “fall” at all, since Laurus, according to his and the Cyprianites’ understanding, was simply returning to union with his “Mother Church”, the Moscow Patriarchate? Did he not understand that it was precisely when ROCOR entered into communion with the Cyprianites, in 1994, that the Synod began negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate and began its rapid descent into union with heresy?

More recently, Agathangelus and his Synod (ROCOR (A)), while continuing fiercely reject all jurisdictions “to the right”, such as ROCOR (V), ROAC or RTOC, have shown increasing sympathy for jurisdictions located “to the left”. Thus Agathangelus and the deposed Patriarch Irenaeus of Jerusalem, who since 2005 has been living under house arrest, now recognize each other and commemorate each other at the Great Entrance in the liturgy. Moreover, as Protopriest Alexander Lebedev writes, “the liberalism of ROCOR (A) in its reception of communities and clerics serves the aims of broadening its influence and increasing its numbers. In the words of Metropolitan Agathangelus, ‘we take everybody’. The politics of careful examination, which we see, for example, in RTOC, does not permit an increase in the quantity of communities and clerics, while ‘economy’ present many opportunities for this. In unofficial Orthodoxy, besides the ‘splinters’ of ROCOR and the Greek Old Calendarist jurisdictions, which are known for their serious attitude to questions of ecclesiology and faith, there exists an enormous ‘bank’ of jurisdictions and clerics who have dubious canonical origins and a vague confession of faith. In ROCOR (A) they have already shown long ago that in order to broaden their ranks they are ready to us this diverse conglomerate. The first step was undertaken by the newly formed jurisdiction already in 2007, when ‘catacomb hierarchs of the Sekachite tradition’ were received [by cheirothesia] into the ranks of their episcopate. This autumn it became known that ROCOR (A) was reviewing the question of receiving into their ranks the Orthodox Church of Ecuador, whose first-hierarchy, however, earlier managed to join the True Orthodox Church of [the ‘healer’] Metropolitan Raphael (Motovilov)...”<sup>562</sup>

**2. The Apostolic Succession of the Agathangelite Synod is doubtful** for two reasons: first, because their Cyprianite co-consecrators’ Synod was formed in schism from the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Chrysostom (Kioussis) of Athens, and secondly, because Agathangelus has not yet publicly renounced the false and heretical councils of 2000 and 2001 – and heretics do not have apostolic succession.

---

<sup>562</sup> Protopriest Alexander Lebedev, “Rasshirenie po vsem napravleniam”, 24 March, 2011, <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&id=83134&topic=615>.

3. There are other Synods having an equal, or greater claim to be the “continuer of ROCOR” – especially RTOC. Bishop Agathangelus’ claim to be the sole canonical successor of ROCOR is founded on nothing stronger than the fact that he was the last to separate from the Lavrite Synod. But is that anything to be proud of? Is it not rather something to be ashamed of? After all, the Holy Canons – in particular, the 15<sup>th</sup> Canon of the First-and-Second Council of Constantinople – do not praise procrastination in matters of the faith, but rather praise those who separate *immediately* heresy is proclaimed. And in the case of ROCOR that took place, not in 2007, as Bishop Agathangelus likes to think, but in 2001, if not in 1994...

Bishop Agathangelus’ position is similar to that of a person who criticizes those who jump off a heavily listing ship that has been holed below the water-line, and himself “jumps” only when the water has reached his neck... And yet his position is still worse. For he claims that the ship he jumped off, ROCOR-MP, and which is now at the bottom of the ocean of this sinful world, is in fact floating majestically on the surface with Christ Himself at its helm! If that is what he believes, then we are entitled to ask: why did he jump in the first place? And still more pertinently: will he not be tempted at some time in the future to return to that ship, becoming one of those who, “having thrust away a good conscience concerning the faith, have made shipwreck...” (I Timothy 1.19)?

Let us return, finally, to the one ray of true light to emerge from the dark and stormy history that is the subject of this small book – the emergence of the Russian True Orthodox Church under Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia. This is the only Church body that the present writer can recommend as having preserved both the faith and the apostolic succession of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in the period before it began to fall away, while at the same time preserving the traditions of the Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, the Catacomb Church. It is a relatively small Church, and compared with uncanonical bodies such as ROCOR (A), it is growing slowly. However, slow but steady growth is no bad thing after the recent period of extreme turmoil.

Moreover, in its Sobor in Odessa in November, 2008 it demonstrated a model of what true Church Sobornost’, or Conciliarity, should be in an age when that quality has been very hard to find. The Sobor issued a large number of documents on a wide range of subjects. And it canonized Metropolitan Philaret of New York and 49 Catacomb confessors, thereby demonstrating its veneration for the faith and piety both of the Russian Church Abroad and of the Catacomb Church.

Let us conclude, then, by quoting one of the Sobor documents, “Definition of the Sacred Council on the Confessional and Ecclesiological Foundations of

the Russian True Orthodox Church", a statement of that Faith that alone can serve as the rock on which the future Russian Church will be built<sup>563</sup>:-

"The Russian True Orthodox Church confesses and holds the Orthodox Christian Faith as it has been preserved by Holy Tradition from the foundation of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church of Christ, and as it was until 1927 in the Local Russian Church, as the Catacomb Church kept it in a confessing spirit, and as the Russian Church Abroad kept it right until the year 2000.

"We believe in the Triune God, the Holy Trinity, as expounded in the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Symbol of faith, and in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church vvhich our Lord Jesus Christ founded, and which is the pillar and ground of the Truth (I Timothy 3.15). We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, a Divino-human organism, in which we, the faithful, constitute Its Body, while the Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1.18). We believe that the gates of hell cannot prevail over Her (Matthew 16.18). Like the Lord Himself, She cannot be destroyed, annihilated or divided, and for that reason does not need to be "saved" by human forces.

"In full unanimity with the Symbol of faith, we confess one baptism for the remission of sins. The Russian True Orthodox Church strictly holds to the ecclesiastical laws which prescribed that it be carried out by three-times and complete immersion in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

"That which the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers of the Church accepted and confirmed, we also accept and confirm, and that which they rejected and anathematized, we also reject and anathematize, without adding or subtracting anything. And together with the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, we proclaim: "We follow the ancient traditions of the Ecumenical Church, we keep the laws of the Fathers; we subject to anathema those who add or take away anything from the Ecumenical Church."

"The Russian True Orthodox Church is an indivisible part of the Local Russian Church, and governs itself on conciliar bases in accordance with the decree of his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, the Holy Synod and Higher Church Council of the Russian Church of November 7/20, 1920, № 362. We have canonical succession from the Catacomb Russian Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad as two equal-in-honour and spiritually united parts of the True Russian Church remaining in Eucharistic and canonical communion under different ecclesiastical administrations, as it was in the time of the Holy Martyr Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, and as was blessed by

---

<sup>563</sup> For all the documents of the Sobor, see <http://www.catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=showcat&cid=22>.

the last lawful First Hierarch of ROCOR, Metropolitan Vitaly. We confess our spiritual and ecclesiological unity with the Holy New Martyrs of Russia and the Father-Confessors of the Catacomb Church, and also with the First Hierarchs of ROCOR and Her outstanding hierarchs and pastors.

“Confessing that the Church saves man, and not man – the Church, we reject the sergianism confessed by the Moscow Patriarchate, which is so-called from the name of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), as a special form of apostasy and ecclesiological heresy. This false teaching is not compatible with the teaching of the Holy Fathers on the Church and on political authority, for sergianism is *the inner preparedness* of the Orthodox Christian for *compromise with antitheism*, and in a broader sense, for compromise with lies, with *any* evil, with the elements of this world. This preparedness proceeds from the heart, from *the spiritual condition* of man himself, and for that reason we affirm that the Moscow Patriarchate is being cunning when it calls sergianism a temporary phenomenon conditioned by a political situation. In raising sergianism – that is, compromise with antitheism – into a *norm* of ecclesiastical life, the Moscow Patriarchate is thereby preparing its flock to recognize the power of the Antichrist as a lawful power, and to accept “the seal on their right hand” (Revelation 13.16). We affirm that true Orthodoxy in our suffering Fatherland cannot be regenerated without a *consciousness* of the sergianist fall and without *repentance for this fall*.

“We are unanimous with the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia and the Catacomb Father-Confessors, and also with the outstanding holy hierarchs and pastors of the Church Abroad, that sergianism is a heresy, which the Moscow Patriarchate that was born from it is “a neo-renovationist schism” which entered into symphony with the antitheist authorities and to which are applicable the definitions and canonical bans of the Russian Church that were laid on renovationism and its hierarchy. Having been formed as a schism, the Moscow Patriarchate unlawfully calls itself “the Mother Church”.

“Our faith in the oneness and uniqueness of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is incompatible with ecumenism, and for that reason we recognize ecumenism to be a heresy that has trampled on the Orthodox Faith. Confessing our unity with the heritage of ROCOR, we confirm the condemnation of ecumenism made by the Council of the Church Abroad in 1983 and the proclamation of a conciliar anathema on this heresy “and on those who have communion with these heretics or help them, or defend their new heresy of ecumenism”. The participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in the ecumenical movement is not a private apostasy of individual hierarchs, but was *conciliarly confirmed* as the Church’s course in 1961 at the Hierarchical Council of the MP. Having joined the “World Council of Churches”, the Moscow Patriarchate has defined itself not only as “a neo-renovationist schism”, but also as a heretical community that has fallen both under the anathema of the Holy Patriarch Tikhon and the All-Russian Council on the



communists and all their co-workers, and under the anathema of the ROCOR Council.

“Also falling under the anathema on the 1983 heresy of ecumenism are all the hierarchs and clergy of the official Local Churches that confess their Eucharistic unity but at the same time participate together in the pan-heresy of ecumenism, in the acceptance of the new calendar, in modernism, and in the construction of the new world order. For that reason the Russian True Orthodox Church can have Eucharistic communion and unity with none of them; and, following the patristic teaching, it decrees that official World Orthodoxy has fallen away from the Church of Christ, and that its sacraments are *ineffective* [*nedejstvenny*] for salvation. By this we confess the witness of Church Tradition that the grace of the Holy Spirit works in a saving manner only in the True Church of Christ, to which heretics and schismatics do not belong.

“We reject the destructive opinion that heretics and schismatics have not fallen away, but are so-called “sick members of the Church”, in whom the grace of God works in an equally saving manner as on the members of the True Orthodox Church. We confess that all the members of the Church who live in the world and bear flesh are sick through their sins, and only in the True Church of Christ can they receive true healing and salvation. But deviation into heresies and schisms is nothing else than falling away from the Body of the True Orthodox Church. That is why, as the Holy New Martyrs of Russia taught, the Moscow Patriarchate is not the True Church of Christ and its sacraments cannot be effective for salvation.

“However, we do not thereby usurp the Judgements of God and do not boldly declare that the Lord is not able to turn to repentance and save a sincere Christian soul that remains in the official church, but affirm that salvation is possible only through entering the Church of Christ.

“We decree that clergy coming into the True Church from the MP must be received through repentance and the carrying out on them of an additional laying on of hands (*kheirothesia*) by the hierarchs of the True Orthodox Church with the aim of completing the ordinations (*kheirotonia*) that the arriving clergy received from the apostate hierarchy of the MP.

“Concerning the rite of reception from heretical and schismatic communities, the Russian True Orthodox Church, as a part of the once united Local Russian Church, continues to preserve Her heritage, Her historically formed local traditions and conciliar decrees, at the basis of which was laid the principle of ecclesiastical condescension (*oikonomia*), in order that, according to the word of the holy Hierarch Philaret (Voznesensky), First Hierarch of ROCOR, “many should not be driven from the Church”.

“In spite of the fact that there now exists an admissible variety of differences in the rites of reception of laymen practiced by some True Orthodox Churches, we consider that it is necessary to proceed towards the overcoming of these differences, basing ourselves on the dogmatic teaching of the Church. For the time being it is possible to relate to these differences in the rites of reception in same way as did St. Cyprian of Carthage in his letter to Jubian: “But someone will say: what will happen to those who, before this, having converted from heresy to the Church, were received into the Church without baptism? The Lord by His mercy is powerful to give them forgiveness, and not to deprive of the gifts of His Church those who, having been received into the Church, reposed in the Church”.

“A basis for changing the rite of reception of laymen from the MP could be, for example, facts concerning the open, official concelebration of the hierarchy of the MP with Roman Catholics or other heretics.

“Confessing the RTOC to be the True Russian Church and the canonical successor in law of the Catacomb and Abroad Churches, we do not isolate ourselves and do not dare to think of ourselves as ‘the only true Church’.

“We confess unity of Faith with our brothers, the Old Calendarist Orthodox Christians in Greece and other countries, who reject the unia with ecumenical and new calendarist official Orthodoxy, and who do not accept the heresy of ecumenism either in its open confession or in its hidden form in the teaching on the “sick in faith” members of the Church.

“The Sacred Council of the Russian True Orthodox Church confirms the validity [dejstvennost'] of the decree of the ROCOR Council of August 15/28, 1932, which decreed “the condemnation of Masonry as a teaching and organization hostile to Christianity, and the condemnation also of all teachings and organizations that are akin to Masonry”. In accordance with this conciliar decree, the idea of the “new world order” begotten by Masonry is subject to condemnation, as well as the processes of globalization introduced with this aim in mind, and the systems of global control over mankind that are directed to preparing society for the establishment of the power of the Antichrist in the future.

“Remaining faithful to the heritage of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of the Catacomb Church, we witness that for True Orthodox archpastors and pastors participation in the processes of world apostasy, one of the forms of which is contemporary political activity, is not permitted. In his service the Orthodox pastor must guard his flock from the destructive influence of “this world”, and the official Orthodoxy that goes in step with it, as well as from the imitation artificially generated by it – so-called “alternative Orthodoxy”, explaining to his flock the destructive essence of these phenomena. Both these phenomena, which surround the Church on the

left and on the right, derive their origin from one and the same apostate source of this world, and are foreign to True Orthodoxy.

“Following the outstanding holy Hierarchs of the Ecumenical and Russian Church, we believe that the power established by God is the Orthodox kingdom. We sorrow over the loss of this God-given Orthodox kingdom by our ancestors, and pray to the Lord for its restoration. However, we also witness to the fact that a truly Orthodox kingdom can be restored in Rus’ only after the repentance of the Russian people and its return to the True Church, for there can be no genuine repentance, nor restoration of an Orthodox monarchy, in a false church. A monarchy founded with the blessing of the church of the evil-doers will have craftiness at its very foundation. Such a kingdom is not pleasing to God; even if great and powerful, it will only prepare the ground for the coming of the Antichrist.

“We call on all Orthodox Christians to stand in the Truth, to increase their penitential prayer and union around our Holy Mother – the True Orthodox Church. The spiritual regeneration both of every individual human soul and of society in general is possible only through repentance and the conciliar participation of all of us in the Body of Christ, in Which the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth and Love, acts. The loss by the community of men of true conciliarity [sobornost’] brings with it the loss of participation in the Body of Christ, which means the loss also of the beneficial action upon this community of the grace of the Holy Spirit. This grace-filled action is possible only through the True Church of Christ.

“Understanding this, the contemporary world is trying to substitute artificial spiritual fakes and false-churches for the True Church. For that reason there is nothing dearer for the Orthodox Christian than the genuine regeneration of the True Orthodox Church, the pure Bride of Christ, Who remains faithful to Her Heavenly Bridegroom. Outside the Church salvation and the true spiritual healing of the soul damaged by the passions is impossible. Amen.”

*March 18/31, 2011.  
St. Edward the Martyr, King of England.*

### **34. RUSSIAN ORTHODOX - ROMAN CATHOLIC RELATIONS:** **A SHORT HISTORY**

The first-ever meeting between the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Moscow took place on February 12, 2016 on the island of Cuba. Many have speculated on the agenda behind this meeting. However, in order to measure its real significance, some historical perspective on Catholic-Orthodox relations in Russia is needed.

#### **1. The Middle Ages**

The Roman papacy fell away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church after it anathematized – and was in turn anathematized by – the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1054. This was just the time when Russia was taking her place as the youngest of the Christian nations. Having been baptized by St. Vladimir in 988, Kievan Rus' was now the largest state in the Orthodox Byzantine commonwealth – although the Great Prince of Kiev acknowledged the formal suzerainty of the Byzantine emperor.

Relations between Russia and the schismatic papacy were fraught almost from the beginning. Thus in 1150 the Roman Catholic Bishop Matthew of Crakow in Poland asked Bernard of Clairvaux to “exterminate the godless rites and customs of the Ruthenians [Russians]”. The “Teutonic Knights” duly answered Bernard's call and invaded Russia, but were defeated at the famous battle on the ice by St. Alexander Nevsky, Prince of Novgorod.

In 1204 the Roman Catholic crusaders conquered Constantinople, and imposed a Catholic patriarch and emperor on the Greeks. Russia, together with Georgia and other Orthodox countries, remained faithful to the Orthodox emperor in Nicaea... Shortly afterwards, in the 1240s, the Mongols conquered Russia – a great tragedy, without a doubt, but a tragedy that, by the Providence of God, turned out for the ultimate benefit of Russia, since the Mongols, though pagans, were much more tolerant of Orthodoxy than the Roman Catholics.

Nor did the threat from Catholicism cease... In 1299 Metropolitan Maximus of Kiev moved his see from Kiev to Moscow, and from the time of his successor, St. Peter of Moscow, the northern city became the new centre of Russian Orthodoxy. There were hopes that Muscovy could unite with the neighbouring pagan state of Lithuania, which, though ruled by pagan princes, had a very large Russian Orthodox population; and in 1383, the Lithuanian Great Prince Jagiello signed a treaty with Moscow and agreed to convert to Orthodoxy. However, he quickly changed his mind and instead, in 1386, converted to Catholicism, which led to the union of Lithuania with Catholic Poland. This state was to become the main threat to the existence of Orthodox Russia for centuries to come.

That Catholic Poland was a real threat already in the fourteenth century, and

even in some parts of Great Russia, is illustrated by an incident that took place in Novgorod, which was traditionally, because of its foreign merchant colony, less anti-Catholic than other parts of Great Russia. "On one occasion at the end of the fourteenth century, the city, in bargaining with the patriarch of Constantinople for privileges for its archbishop, threatened to go to Rome as a final argument. This threat was not serious and did not fail to elicit a severe rebuke from the patriarch, but, up to the time of the loss of their independence, the Novgorodians saw no objection against a political alliance with the Catholic kings of Lithuanian Poland."<sup>564</sup>

In 1438-39, the Byzantines, led by their emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople, who were still the formal suzerains of the Russian state and Church, entered into union with Rome at the Council of Florence in 1439.

This was a decisive moment in the history of Russia, when the Russian State and Church took over the leadership of the Russian Church in resisting the false union with Rome.

In 1434, on the death of Metropolitan Photius, Bishop Jonah of Ryazan had been elected metropolitan of Kiev and sent to Constantinople for consecration. "But here," writes Protopriest Peter Smirnov, "obstacles were encountered. The Greeks were going through their last years. The Turks had moved up to Constantinople from all sides. The only hope of salvation was seen to be help from the West, but that could be bought only by means of humiliation before the Roman pope. Negotiations concerning the union of the Churches were undertaken. On the Latin side, people were being prepared in the East who would be able to agree to union, and they were given influential places and posts. One of these people was a certain Isidore, a very talented and educated person, but one who from a moral point of view was not especially firm, and was capable of changing his convictions. It was he whom they hastened to appoint as metropolitan for Moscow before the arrival of Jonah in Constantinople. St. Jonah was promised the metropolitanate after Isidore.

"Soon after Isidore had arrived in Moscow, he declared that the Eighth Ecumenical Council was being prepared in Italy for the union of the Churches, and that it was necessary for him to be there. Then he began to prepare for the journey. Great Prince Basil Vasilievich tried in every way to dissuade Isidore from taking part in the council. Finally he said to him: "If you unfailingly desire to go to the eighth council, bring us thence our ancient Orthodoxy, which we received from our ancestor Vladimir, and do not bring us anything new and foreign, which we will not accept.' Isidore swore to stand for Orthodoxy, but at the council of Florence he was especially zealous in promoting an outcome that was favourable for the pope. At the end of the council and after the reception of the unia, Isidore... returned to Moscow, and in his first service began to commemorate the pope instead of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The great

---

<sup>564</sup> G. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I, p. 336.

prince publicly called him a Latin seducer and heretic and ordered that he be placed under guard until a conciliar resolution of the matter. The Russian bishops gathered in Moscow [in 1441] and condemned Isidore. Together with his disciple Gregory he fled to Tver, then Lithuania, and finally to Rome, where he remained for good with the pope.

“After Isidore’s flight from Russia, St. Jonah remained for seven more years a simple bishop... Finally, in 1448... Basil Vasilievich summoned all the bishops of the Russian land to a council. The Fathers of the Council, on the basis of the Church canons, previous examples and the decision of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch that St. Jonah should be metropolitan after Isidore, appointed him to the see of the first-hierarchy. At a triumphant service in the Dormition cathedral the omophorion which had placed on earlier metropolitans was placed on him, and the great metropolitan’s staff, the symbol of first-hierarchical power, was put into his hands.”<sup>565</sup>

The Russian Church was now technically in schism from the Great Church of Constantinople, which had fallen into the Latin heresy... “However,” writes N. Boyeikov, “even after he had learned about the treachery of the Orthodox emperor and the events which had shaken Byzantium, Basil did not consider that he had the right to break the canonical dependence which the Russian Church had inherited since the time of the Baptism of Rus’, and after Jonah’s election he wrote the following: ‘After the death of Metropolitan Photius, having taken counsel with our mother, the Great Princess, and with our brothers, the Russian princes, both the Great Princes and the local ones, together with the lord of the Lithuanian land, the hierarchs and all the clergy, the boyars and all the Russian land, we elected Bishop Jonah of Ryazan and sent him to you in Constantinople for consecration together with our envoy. But before his arrival there the emperor and patriarch consecrated Isidore as metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus’, while to Jonah they said: “Go to your see - the Ryazan episcopate. If Isidore dies or something else happens to him, then be ready to be blessed for the metropolitan see of all Rus’.” Since a disagreement in the Church of God has taken place in our blessed kingdoms, travellers to Constantinople have suffered all kinds of difficulties on the road, there is great disorder in our countries, the godless Hagarenes have invaded, there have been civil wars, and we ourselves have suffered terrible things, not from foreigners, but from our own brothers. In view of this great need, we have assembled our Russian hierarchs, and, in accordance with the canons, we have consecrated the above-mentioned Jonah to the Russian metropolitanate of Kiev and all Rus’. We have acted in this way because of great need, and not out of pride or boldness. We shall remain to the end of the age devoted to the Orthodoxy we have received; our Church will always seek the blessing of the Church of Tsargrad and obey her in everything according to the ancient piety. And our father Jonah also begs for blessing and union in that which does not concern the present new disagreements, and we beseech your holy

---

<sup>565</sup> Smirnov, *Istoria Khristianskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Orthodox Christian Church), Moscow: Krutitskoe podvorye, 2000, pp. 159-160.

kingdom to be kindly disposed to our father Metropolitan Jonah. We wanted to write about all these church matters to the most holy Orthodox patriarch, too; and to ask his blessing and prayers. But we do not know whether there is a patriarch in your royal city or not. But if God grants that you will have a patriarch according to the ancient piety, then we shall inform him of all our circumstances and ask for his blessing.'

"On reading this gramota of the Great Prince Basil, one is amazed at his tact and the restraint of his style. Knowing that the emperor himself had betrayed the faith, that Patriarch Gregory had fled to Rome, as also Isidore who had been sent to Moscow, Basil II, instead of giving a well-merited rebuke to his teachers and instructors, himself apologised for the fact that circumstances had compelled the Russian bishops to consecrate a metropolitan for themselves, and comes near to begging him to receive Jonah with honour. It is remarkable that the Great Prince at every point emphasizes that this consecration took place 'in accordance with the canons', while doubting whether there was a lawful patriarch in Byzantium itself or not. The whole of this gramota is full of true Christian humility and brotherly compassion for the emperor who had fallen on hard times."<sup>566</sup>

The Russian Church was now de facto autocephalous – and would become so de jure towards the end of the sixteenth century. And soon, after the fall of New Rome in 1453, the Russian State, too, would be independent, not only in the sense of being de facto self-governing (she had been that for centuries), but also in the sense of owing no filial, de jure allegiance to any other State. Russia was becoming the leader of the Orthodox world and the main champion of the Orthodox Faith against the heresy of Roman Catholicism...

## **2. The Unia of Brest-Litovsk**

On emerging from under the yoke of the Mongols in the late fifteenth century, the Russians did not forget the threat of Catholicism: by the sixteenth century they had turned their land into a fortress whose main purpose was: to preserve the Orthodox Faith pure and undefiled from the ravages of the Latins. For the re-emergence of Russia as an independent (in fact, the *only* independent) Orthodox state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries coincided with the rise to power of one of the two great states of the Catholic Counter-Reformation – Poland. At the same time that the other great Catholic State, the Hapsburg Empire, was slaughtering Protestants in the West, the Poles – with the active connivance of the Jews (of whom there were millions on their territory) – were persecuting the Orthodox over a vast swathe of what is now the Ukraine and Belorussia.

Finally, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Poles conquered Moscow and placed a Catholic king, the "false Dmitri", in the Kremlin. But

---

<sup>566</sup> Boyeikov, *Tserkov', Rus' i Rim (The Church, Rus' and Rome)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983. See Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Patriarch Hermogen of Moscow from his prison cell in the Kremlin issued appeals to the Russians to rise up against the heretical invaders. And although Hermogen did not live to see the outcome (he was starved to death in his cell), his appeals were heeded, and in 1612 a great army of national liberation drove the Poles and the Swedes, if not out of Russia completely, at any rate out of her historical heartland.

From the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries the Orthodox peasants living in what is now Belorussia and Western Ukraine were severely persecuted by their Polish-Lithuanian landlords and the Jesuits. The cause was the foundation of the Society of Jesus in 1540, which aimed to buttress the buttressing of the Counter-Reformation papacy throughout the world. The Jesuits were soon waging war, not only against Protestantism, but also against Orthodoxy, and their methods included both crude force and the subtler weapon of education.

“At the end of the 16th century,” writes Protopriest Peter Smirnov, “the so-called Lithuanian union took place, or the union of the Orthodox Christians living in the south-western dioceses in separation from the Moscow Patriarchate, with the Roman Catholic Church.

“The reasons for this event, which was so sad for the Orthodox Church and so wretched for the whole of the south-western region were: the lack of stability in the position and administration of the separated dioceses; the intrigues on the part of the Latins and in particular the Jesuits; the betrayal of Orthodoxy by certain bishops who were at that time administering the south-western part of the Russian Church.

“With the separation of the south-western dioceses under the authority of a special metropolitan, the question arose: to whom were they to be hierarchically subject? Against the will of the initiators of the separation, the south-western metropolia was subjected to the power of the Patriarch of Constantinople, and the patriarchs, in view of the dangers presented by the Latins, intensified their supervision over the separated dioceses.”<sup>567</sup>

The formerly Russian lands from Kiev westwards were largely deprived of political protection until a part of the Ukraine came under the dominion of Moscow in 1654 as a result of the victories of Bogdan Chmielnicki and his Cossack armies. Until then they were persecuted by the Poles and the Jews.

“In such a situation, the Jesuits appeared in the south-western dioceses and with their usual skill and persistence used all the favourable circumstances to further their ends, that is, to spread the power of the Roman pope. They took into their hands control of the schools, and instilled in the children of the Russian boyars a disgust for the Orthodox clergy and the Russian faith, which they called ‘kholop’ (that is, the faith of the simple people). The fruits of this education were

---

<sup>567</sup> Smirnov, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-204.



not slow to manifest themselves. The majority of the Russian boyars and princes went over to Latinism. To counter the influence of the Jesuits in many cities brotherhoods were founded. These received important rights from the Eastern Patriarchs. Thus, for example, the Lvov brotherhood had the right to rebuke the bishops themselves for incorrect thinking, and even expel them from the Church. New difficulties appeared, which were skilfully exploited by the Jesuits. They armed the bishops against the brotherhoods and against the patriarchs (the slaves of the Sultans), pointed out the excellent situation of the Catholic bishops, many of whom had seats in the senate, and honours and wealth and power. The Polish government helped the Jesuits in every way, and at their direction offered episcopal sees to such people as might later turn out to be their obedient instruments. Such in particular were Cyril Terletsky, Bishop of Lutsk, and Hypatius Potsey, Bishop of Vladimir-in-Volhynia....

“The immediate excuse for the unia was provided by the following circumstance. Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople, during his journey through the south of Russia to Moscow to establish the patriarch, defrocked the Kievan Metropolitan Onesiphorus for bigamy, and appointed in his place Michael Ragoza, and commanded him to convene a council, by his return, to discuss another bigamist who had been accused of many crimes, Cyril Terletsky. Michael Ragoza was a kind person, but weak in character, he did not convene a council inflicted unnecessary delays and expenses on the patriarch. The Patriarch, summoned out of Russia by his own affairs, sent letters of attorney to Ragoza and Bishop Meletius of Vladimir (in Volhynia) for the trial of Teretsky. Both these letters were seized by Cyril, and the affair continued to be dragged out. Meanwhile, Meletius died, and Cyril Terletsky succeeded in presenting the Vladimir see to his friend, Hypatius Potsey. Fearing the appointment of a new trial on himself from the patriarch, Cyril hastened to act in favour of the unia, and made an ally for himself in Hypatius, who was indebted to him.

“In 1593 they openly suggested the unia to the other south-western bishops in order to liberate themselves from the power of the patriarch and the interference of laymen in Church administration...”<sup>568</sup>

Now the Russian bishops wanted to secure for themselves a certain degree of autonomy, and the retention of the eastern rite in the Divine services. Differences in rites had been allowed by the decrees of the council of Florence in 1439. “However,” as V.M. Lourié writes, “after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Roman Catholic church was not interested in giving anyone the right of administrative autonomy. Therefore we must call it a diplomatic victory for the Orthodox supporters of the unia that they succeeded in convincing the Roman curia of the necessity of establishing in Poland-Lithuania a parallel Catholic hierarchy of the Greek rite, which would be independent of the local Latin bishops. In 1595 the diplomatic efforts of the bishops were directed, on the one hand, to securing the future uniate organization at as high a degree of autonomy

---

<sup>568</sup> Smirnov, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-207, 208.

as possible, and one the other, to convincing the Orthodox aristocracy to accept the unia. Among the nobles the main opponent of the unia was Prince Constantine Ostrozhsy. By the summer of 1595 such a sharp conflict had been lit between the bishops and the laity that Patriarch Jeremiah Tranos of Constantinople turned directly to the laity, passing by the bishops. The patriarch sent to Jassy (Romania) his exarch Nicephorus, who convened a council of six bishops, including the metropolitans of Moldavia-Wallachia (Romania) and Ugro-Wallachia (Hungary). On August 17, 1595 this council issued a decree in which it addressed 'the nobles and simple people' who were 'under the power of the Polish king', telling them not to submit to their local bishops. But the latter were told immediately to present penitential acts to the patriarch, otherwise they would be stripped of their rank, while the laymen would receive the right to put forward their own candidates to the Episcopal sees that had become vacant (Welykyj, 1970, 120-121, document № 69). The bishops found themselves to be not only on the verge of being deprived of their rank, but also under threat of excommunication from the Church. It goes without saying that as private individuals they would not have been able to influence the decision of the question of the unia with Rome.

"The publication of this act could not be hidden from the Roman curia, and therefore the bishops found themselves in a situation in which their position at the negotiations with Rome was severely shaken. It was necessary to act without delay and agree now even to almost any conditions. And so two of the West Russian bishops set off for Rome as fully-empowered representatives of the whole of the episcopate of the Kievan metropolia. The upshot of their stay in Rome from November, 1595 to March, 1596 was the acceptance of the conditions of the future unia without any guarantees of equality between the Catholic churches of different rites – the Latin and Greek. The unia was established by the will of the Roman Pope, and not at all as the result of negotiations of the two sides. The Russian bishops were not even accepted as a 'side'. The future uniatic church had to accept not only the decrees of the council of Florence but also those of the council of Trent. Moreover, it had to be ready for any changes, including changes in rites, that the Pope might introduce. The only right that the bishops succeeded in preserving was the right of a local council to elect the Metropolitan of Kiev. However, this had to be followed by the confirmation of the Roman Pope.

"Prince Ostrozhsy, in his turn, actively opposed the unia. A significant part of the Orthodox nobility took his side. Prince Ostrozhsy and his supporters succeeded in creating a schism in the pro-unia party: two bishops separated from the others, refusing to support the unia. Their renunciation of their former position is explained by the fact that they were in a state of significantly greater dependence on the local magnates than on the king. It is of note that Gedeon Balaban, Bishop of Lvov, who was the first to begin preparing his diocese for the unia, was one of these two bishops. Prince Ostrozhsy invited Exarch Nicephorus to Poland-Lithuania.

"In October, 1595 two councils were opened simultaneously in Brest. One of

them took place with the participation of five bishops and proclaimed the unia with Rome. The other was presided over by Exarch Nicephorus. This council excommunicated the uniates, which became the beginning of the Orthodox resistance to the unia.

“Soon Nicephorus was accused of spying for Turkey and was put in prison under guard. He died in prison in 1598 or 1599. The role of the spiritual leader of the Orthodox resistance passed to Ivan of Vishna...”<sup>569</sup>

Smirnov writes: “The whole affair was carried through, as was the custom of the Jesuits, with various forgeries and deceptions. Thus, for example, they took the signatures of the two bishops on white blanks, supposedly in case there would be unforeseen petitions before the king on behalf of the Orthodox, and meanwhile on these blanks they wrote a petition for the unia. Potsej and Terletsky made such concessions to the Pope in Rome as they had not been authorised to make even by the bishops who thought like them. Terletsky and Potsej had hardly returned from Rome before these forgeries were exposed, which elicited strong indignation against them on the part of some bishops (Gideon of Lvov and Michael of Peremysl) the Orthodox princes (Prince Ostrozhsy) and others...

“From this time, there began persecutions against the Orthodox. The uniate bishops removed the Orthodox priests and put uniates in their place. The Orthodox brotherhoods were declared to be mutinous assemblies, and those faithful to Orthodoxy were deprived of posts and oppressed in trade and crafts. The peasants were subjected to all kinds of indignities by their Catholic landlords. The [Orthodox] churches were forcibly turned into uniate ones or were leased out to Jews. The leaseholder had the keys to the church and extracted taxes for every service and need. Many of the Orthodox fled from these restrictions to the Cossacks in the steppes, who rose up in defence of the Orthodox faith under the leadership of Nalivaiki. But the Poles overcame them and Nalivaiki was burned to death in a brazen bull. Then a fresh rebellion broke out under Taras. But, happily for the Orthodox, their wrathful persecutor Sigismund III died. His successor, Vladislav IV, gave the Orthodox Church privileges, with the help of which she strengthened herself for the coming struggle with the uniates and Catholics...

“However, although Vladislav was well-disposed towards the Orthodox, the Poles did not obey him and continued to oppress them. The Cossacks several times took up arms, and when they fell into captivity to the Poles, the latter subjected them to terrible tortures. Some were stretched on the wheel, others had their arms and legs broken, others were pierced with spikes and placed on the rack. Children were burned on iron grills before the eyes of their fathers and

---

<sup>569</sup> Lourié, “Brestskaia unia i RPTsZ: istoricheskie paralleli” (The Brest Unia and ROCOR: historical parallels), <http://hgr.livejournal.com/1099549.html>.

mothers.”<sup>570</sup>

Oleg Platonov writes: “All the persecutions against the Orthodox in the West Russian lands were carried out by the Jews and the Catholics together. Having given the Russian churches into the hands of the Jews who were close to them in spirit, the Polish aristocracy laughingly watched as the defilement of Christian holy things was carried out by the Jews. The Catholic priests and uniates even incited the Jews to do this, calculating in this way to turn the Russians away from Orthodoxy.

“As Archbishop Philaret recounts: ‘Those churches whose parishioners could be converted to the unia by no kind of violence were leased to the Jews: the keys of the churches and bell-towers passed into their hands. If it was necessary to carry out a Church need, then one had to go and trade with the Jew, for whom gold was an idol and the faith of Christ the object of spiteful mockery and profanation. One had to pay up to five talers for each liturgy, and the same for baptism and burial. The uniате received paschal bread wherever and however he wanted it, while the Orthodox could not bake it himself or buy it in any other way than from a Jew at Jewish rates. The Jews would make a mark with coal on the prosphoras bought for commemorating the living or the dead. Only then could it be accepted for the altar.’”<sup>571</sup>

Especially notorious as a persecutor of the Orthodox was the uniате Bishop Joasaph Kuntsevich of Polotsk. Lev Sapega, the head of the Great Principality of Lithuania, wrote to Kuntsevich on the Polish king’s behalf: “I admit, that I, too, was concerned about the cause of the Unia and that it would be imprudent to abandon it. But it had never occurred to me that your Eminence would implement it using such violent measures... You say that you are ‘free to drown the infidels [i.e. the Orthodox who rejected the Unia], to chop their heads off’, etc. Not so! The Lord’s commandment expresses a strict prohibition to all, which concerns you also. When you violated human consciences, closed churches so that people should perish like infidels without divine services, without Christian rites and sacraments; when you abused the King’s favours and privileges – you managed without us. But when there is a need to suppress seditions caused by your excesses you want us to cover up for you... As to the dangers that threaten your life, one may say that everyone is the cause of his own misfortune. Stop making trouble, do not subject us to the general hatred of the people and you yourself to obvious danger and general criticism... Everywhere one hears people grumbling that you do not have any worthy priests, but only blind ones... Your ignorant priests are the bane of the people... But tell me, your Eminence, whom did you win over, whom did you attract through your severity?... It will turn out that in Polotsk itself you have lost even those who until now were obedient to you. You have turned sheep into goats, you have plunged the state into danger, and maybe all of us Catholics – into ruin... It has been rumoured that they (the

---

<sup>570</sup> Smirnov, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-207, 208.

<sup>571</sup> Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia’s Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998, p. 224.

Orthodox) would rather be under the infidel Turk than endure such violence... You yourself are the cause of their rebellion. Instead of joy, your notorious Unia has brought us only troubles and discords and has become so loathsome that we would rather be without it!"<sup>572</sup>

On May 22, 1620, local people gathered at the Trinity monastery near Polotsk to express their indignation at Kuntsevich's cruelty. "These people suffered a terrible fate: an armed crowd of uniates surrounded the monastery and set it on fire. As the fire was raging and destroying the monastery and burning alive everyone within its walls, Joasaphat Kuntsevich was performing on a nearby hill a thanksgiving service accompanied by the cries of the victims of the fire..."<sup>573</sup>

In 1623 Kuntsevich was killed by the people of Vitebsk. In 1867 Pope Pius IX "glorified" him...

### **3. The Eighteenth Century**

Even after the union of the Eastern Ukraine with Russia in 1686, very extensive formerly Russian lands still remained under Polish control. However, in 1717, as a result of civil war between King Augustus II and his nobles, Poland fell under the effective control of Russia. And so Poland's domination of the South Russian lands from the fourteenth century onwards now began to be reversed...

Nevertheless, the persecution of the Orthodox living in Poland did not cease. The Polish nobility did everything they could to deny the non-Roman Catholic Christians (the Orthodox, the Lutherans, and the Calvinists) political rights until well into the eighteenth century. As for the Orthodox, writes A.P. Dobroklonsky, they "suffered every possible restriction. In 1717 the Sejm deprived them of their right to elect deputies to the sejms and forbade the construction of new and the repairing of old churches; in 1733 the Sejm removed them from all public posts. If that is how the government itself treated them, their enemies could boldly fall upon them with fanatical spite. The Orthodox were deprived of all their dioceses and with great difficulty held on to one, the Belorussian; they were also deprived of the brotherhoods, which either disappeared or accepted the unia. Monasteries and parish churches with their lands were forcibly taken from them... From 1721 to 1747, according to the calculations of the Belorussian Bishop Jerome, 165 Orthodox churches were removed, so that by 1755 in the whole of the Belorussian diocese there remained only 130; and these were in a pitiful state... Orthodox religious processions were broken up, and Orthodox holy things subjected to mockery... The Dominicans and Basilians acted in the same way, being sent as missionaries to Belorussia and the Ukraine - those 'lands of the infidels', as the Catholics called them, - to convert the Orthodox... They went round the villages and recruited people to the unia; any of those recruited who carried out Orthodox needs was punished as an apostate. Orthodox monasteries were often subjected

---

<sup>572</sup> L. Perepiolkina, *Ecumenism - A Path to Perdition*, St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 227-228.

<sup>573</sup> Perepiolkina, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

to attacks by peasants and schoolboys; the monks suffered beatings, mutilations and death. 'How many of them,' exclaimed [Bishop] George Konissky, 'were thrown out of their homes, many of them were put in prisons, in deep pits, they were shut up in kennels with the dogs, they were starved by hunger and thirst, fed on hay; how many were beaten and mutilated, and some even killed!'... The Orthodox white clergy were reduced to poverty, ignorance and extreme humiliation. All the Belorussian bishops were subjected to insults, and some even to armed assault....

"The Orthodox sought defenders for themselves in Russia, constantly sending complaints and requests to the court and the Holy Synod. The Russian government according to the eternal peace of 1686 had reserved for itself the right to protect the Orthodox inhabitants of Poland, and often sent its notes to the Polish court and through its ambassadors in Poland demanded that the Orthodox should be given back the dioceses that had been granted to them according to the eternal peace and that the persecutions should cease; it also wrote about this to Rome, even threatening to deprive the Catholics living in Russia of freedom of worship; more than once it appointed special commissars to Poland for the defence of the Orthodox from abuse and in order to investigate complaints. But the Polish government either replied with promises or was silent and dragged out the affair from one Sejm to another. True, there were cases when the king issued orders for the cessation of persecutions... But such instructions were usually not listened to, and the persecution of the Orthodox continued. Meanwhile the Russian government insufficiently insisted on the carrying out of its demands.

"Only from the time of Catherine II did the circumstances change. On arriving at her coronation in Moscow, George Konissky vividly described for her the wretched condition of the Orthodox in Poland and besought her intervention (1762). A year later all the Orthodox of Poland interceded with her about this. The empress promised her protection and made the usual representation to the Polish court. At that time a new king, Stanislaw Poniatovsky, had been established, with her assistance, on the Polish throne. George Konissky personally appeared before him and described the sufferings of the Orthodox in such a lively manner that the king promised to do everything to restore the rights of the Orthodox (1765) and actually issued a decree on the confirmation of their religious rights, demanding that the uniate authorities cut short their violence. However, the uniate and Catholic authorities were not thinking of obeying the king. Their spite against the Orthodox found fresh food for itself. In 1765-1766, amidst the Russian population of Poland, and mainly in Little Russia, a powerful mass movement against the unia had begun. Its heart was the Orthodox see of Pereyaslawl headed by Bishop Gervasius Lintsevsky and the Motroninsky monastery led by Abbot Melchizedek Znachko-Yavorsky. Multitudes of the people went there and were there inspired to the task of returning from the unia to Orthodoxy. Crowds of people gathered everywhere in the villages; together they swore to uphold the Orthodox faith to the last drop of their blood, they restored Orthodox churches and restored

Orthodox priests provided for them by Gervasius. They persuaded uniate priests to return to Orthodoxy, and if they refused either drove them out of the parishes or locked the churches. Whole parishes returned to Orthodoxy. The uniate authorities decide to stop this movement. The uniate metropolitan sent a fanatical zealot for the unia, the official Mokritsky, to the Ukraine with a band of soldiers. The Orthodox churches began to be sealed or confiscated; the people were forced by beatings to renounce Orthodoxy. Abbot Melchizedek was subjected to tortures and thrown into prison. There were even cases of killings for the faith... This violence elicited a fresh representation from the Russian court. Moreover, the courts of Prussia, England, Sweden and Denmark demanded that the Poles reviewed the question of the dissidents (Orthodox and Protestants) at the Sejm and protected their rights. However, the Sejm that took place in 1766 still further restricted their religious liberty. The Catholic bishops Soltyk and Krasinsky by their epistles stirred up the people against the dissidents; the Pope himself (Clement XIII) tried to persuade Stanislaw not to make concessions. Then the dissidents began to act in a more friendly manner towards each other. In Torn and Slutsk conferences of noblemen were convened, and in other places up to 200 similar unions appeared with the aim of obtaining rights for the non-Catholics of Poland. In her turn Russia, in order to support these demands, moved her army into Poland. Relying on it, the Russian ambassador in Poland Repin demanded a review of the question of the dissidents at the new sejm in 1767. When at this Sejm the Catholic bishops Soltyk, Zalusky and some others continued to resist any concessions in favour of the dissidents, Repin arrested them and the Sejm agreed upon some important concessions: everything published against the dissidents was rescinded, complete freedom of faith and Divine services was proclaimed, they were given the right to build churches and schools, convene councils, take part in Sejms and in the Senate, educate children born from mixed marriages in the faith of their parents – sons in the faith of their fathers and daughters in the faith of their mothers, and forcible conversions to the unia were forbidden. These decrees were confirmed by a treaty between Russia and Poland in 1768. It was then decided that the Belorussian see should remain forever in the power of the Orthodox together with all the monasteries, churches and church properties, while the monasteries and churches that had been incorretly taken from them were to be returned. For this a special mixed commission of Catholics and dissidents – the latter led by George Konissky – was appointed. In these circumstances the movement among the uniates that had begun before was renewed with fresh force. Most of them – sometimes in whole parishes – declared their desire to return to Orthodoxy; these declarations were addressed to George Konissky, presented to Repin and written down in official books; even the uniate bishops turned to the king with a request that they be allowed to enter into discussions concerning a reunion of the uniates with the Greco-Russian Church. But the indecisiveness of the Polish and Russian governments hindered the realization of these desires. Comparatively few parishes succeeded in returning to Orthodoxy, and then the matter of their reunion was stopped for a time. Immediately the Russian army left the boundaries of Poland, the Polish fanatics again set about their customary way of behaving. Bishop Krasinsky of Kamenets

went round Poland in the clothes of a pilgrim and everywhere stirred up hatred against the dissidents; the papal nuncio fanned the flames of this hatred in appeals to the clergy, and sometimes also in instructions to the people. Those who were discontented with the Sejm of 1767 convened the conference of Bar in order to deprive the dissidents of the rights that had been granted them. Again there arose a persecution of the Orthodox, who could not stand the violence. In Trans-Dnieper Ukraine, under the leadership of the zaporozhets Maxim Zhelezniak, a popular uprising known as the Koliivschina began. The anger of the rebels was vented most of all on the landowners, the Jews, the Catholic priests and the uniate priests. They were all mercilessly beaten up, their homes were burned down, their property was looted; even the whole of the small town of Uman was ravaged. The rebellion enveloped the whole western region. The Polish government was not able to cope with it. The Russian armies under Krechetnikov came to its aid. The revolt was put down. But unfortunately, Krechetnikov and Repin, listening to the insinuations of the Poles and not seeing the true reasons for the rebellion, looked on it as an exclusively anti-state peasants' rebellion, and so they themselves helped in destroying that which stood for Orthodoxy and Russian nationality in the Ukraine. Gervasius and Melchizedek, being suspected of rebellion, were retired; the Orthodox people, being accused of stirring up the people, had to hide in order to avoid punishment. The uniate priests took possession of many Orthodox parishes; in many places the Orthodox were forced to appeal with requests to perform needs to parishless priests coming from Moldavia and Wallachia. Fortunately, in 1772 there came the first division of Poland, in accordance with which Belorussia with its population of 1,360,000 was united with Russia. At this the Polish government was obliged to take measures to pacify the Orthodox who remained in their power, but in actual fact nothing was done. A new woe was then added to the already difficult position of the Orthodox: With the union of Belorussia with Russia not one Orthodox bishop was left within the confines of Poland, and for ordinations the Orthodox were forced to turn to Russia or Wallachia. Only in 1785 did the Russian government, with the agreement of the Polish king, appoint a special bishop for them, Victor Sadkovsky, with the title of Bishop of Pereyaslavl and vicar of Kiev, with a salary and place of residence in Slutsk monastery. But when, with his arrival, another movement in favour of Orthodoxy arose among the Ukrainian uniates, the Poles were disturbed. Rumours spread that another Koliivschina was being prepared and that the clergy were inciting the people to rebel. Whatever Victor did to quash these rumours, they continued to grow. They began to say that arms for a planned beating up of the Catholics and uniates were being stored in the hierarchical house and in the monasteries. In accordance with an order of the sejm, Victor was seized and taken in fetters to Warsaw, where he was thrown into an arms depot (1789); some Orthodox priests were subjected to the same treatment; many were forced to save themselves by fleeing to Russia. The whole of the Orthodox clergy were rounded up to swear an oath of allegiance to the king. After this the thought was voiced in the Sejm of 1791 of freeing the Orthodox Church within the confines of Poland from Russian influence by making it independent of the Russian Synod and transferring it into



the immediate jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Pinsk congregation, made up of representatives of the clergy and brotherhoods, did indeed work out a project for the conciliar administration of the Church. But it was not fated to be put into effect. Soon there followed, one after the other, the second (1793) and third (1795) divisions of Poland, in accordance with which Russia acquired all the ancient Russian lands with the exception of Galicia, and the Lithuanian region with a population of more than 4 million.

“With the union of Belorussia and the south-western regions to Russia there finally came to an end the age-old sufferings of the Orthodox there. At the same time there came the right opportunity for the uniates to throw off the fetters of the unia that had been forcibly imposed upon them. The Belorussian Archbishop George Konissky received many declarations from uniate parishes wishing to return to Orthodoxy. Although the Russian government did not allow him to do anything about these declarations without special permission, and itself did not give permission for about 8 years, the striving of the uniates for Orthodoxy did not wane. When, finally, permission was given, up to 130,000 uniates went over to Orthodoxy. In the south-western region an energetic assistant of George Konissky in the work of uniting the uniates was Victor Sadkovsky, who had been released from prison and raised to the see of Minsk (1793). With the permission of the government, he published an appeal to the uniates of his diocese urging them to return to Orthodoxy. Soon, on the orders of the government, the same was done in the Belorussian region. Moreover, the government told local authorities to remove all obstacles that might appear in the unification of the uniates on the part of the Roman Catholic clergy and landowners, and threatened the guilty with responsibility before the law, while at the same time forbidding their forcible union. The appeals had an extraordinary success. In less than a year (from the middle of 1794 to the beginning of 1795), more than one-and-a-half million uniates had joined the Orthodox Church; the numbers of those united by the end of the reign of Catherine II came to no less than two million.”<sup>574</sup>

The liberation of millions of Orthodox peasants from their Polish and Jewish persecutors, under whom they had suffered already for centuries, and the return of millions of uniates, i.e. those Orthodox who had been beguiled into Catholicism after the Unia of Brest-Litovsk, to their original faith and Church, was undoubtedly a great triumph of Orthodoxy. However, the bitter fact was that the cost of the annexation of Poland (with help from Prussia in the west and Austria in the south) came at a very high cost – not only in terms of the thousands of people killed on both sides in the eighteenth century, but in another very important respect. For it meant the inclusion into the Russian empire of many millions of Poles and Jews who were bitterly hostile both to Russia and to the Orthodox faith, and who were to cause continual civil strife in the western territories right up to the First World War.

---

<sup>574</sup> Dobroklonsky, *Rukovodstvo po istorii russkoj tserkvi* (A Guide to the History of the Russian Church), Moscow, 2001, pp. 651-652.

As Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes, “from the point of view of the interests of Great Russia, it was necessary to pacify Poland, but not seize the age-old Polish and purely Lithuanian lands. This wrong attitude of Russia to the neighbouring peoples then became a ‘mine’ which later more than once exploded with bad consequences for Russia...”<sup>575</sup>

#### **4. From 1812 to the Crimean War**

Napoleon Bonaparte was no friend of Catholicism, but he did conclude a Concordat with the Pope, and was probably behind the ecumenical overtures that the Pope made to the Russian Church in 1810. For Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, as K.A. Papmehl writes, “became the recipient of ecumenical overtures by the French senator Grégoire (formerly Bishop of Blois), presumably on Napoleon’s initiative. In a letter dated in Paris in May of that year, Grégoire referred to the discussions held in 1717, at the Sorbonne, between Peter I and some French bishops, with a view of exploring the prospects of re-unification. Peter apparently passed the matter on to the synod of Russian bishops who, in their turn, indicated that they could not commit themselves on a matter of such importance without consulting the Eastern Patriarchs. Nothing had been heard from the Russian side since then. Grégoire nevertheless assumed that the consultation must have taken place and asked for copies of the Patriarchs’ written opinions. He concluded his letter by assuring Platon that he was hoping and praying for reunification of the Churches...”

“Platon passed the letter to the Synod in St. Petersburg. In 1811 [it] replied to Grégoire, with Emperor Alexander’s approval, to the effect that a search of Russian archives failed to reveal any of the relevant documents. The idea of a union, Platon added, was, in any case ‘contrary to the mood of the Russian people’ who were deeply attached to their faith and concerned with its preservation in a pure and unadulterated form.”<sup>576</sup>

Platon himself had never been an ecumenist; he abhorred the “tolerance” and “indifferentism” that Masonry had injected into European religious life. During his journey to Kiev and other Russian cities in 1804 he reproached “the Russian authorities for following ‘that new-fangled mode of thinking which is called tolerance’ in their relations with the Jesuits, and blamed the Jews for the impoverishment of the Christian population in the areas in which they are numerous”.<sup>577</sup>

Alexander’s victory over Napoleon had important religious consequences. First, Russian Orthodoxy was now at the heart of Catholic Europe. Thus the Orthodox Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Alexander’s namesday, September 12,

---

<sup>575</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 232.

<sup>576</sup> Papmehl, *Metropolitan Platon of Moscow*, Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1983, p. 85.

<sup>577</sup> Papmehl, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

1815, on seven altars on the Plaine de Vertus, eighty miles east of Paris, in the presence of the Russian army and all the leading political and military leaders of Europe. Neither before nor since in the modern history of Europe has there been such a universal witness, by all the leaders of the Great Powers, to the true King of kings and Lord of lords and His true religion, Orthodox Christianity. And if this was just a diplomatic concession on the part of the non-Orthodox powers, it was much more than that for Alexander. His Orthodox spirit, so puzzling to the other leaders of Europe, was manifested in a letter he wrote that same evening: "This day has been the most beautiful in all my life. My heart was filled with love for my enemies. In tears at the foot of the Cross, I prayed with fervour that France might be saved..."<sup>578</sup>

Secondly, Alexander now presented his fellow sovereigns with a treaty creating a Holy Alliance of Christian monarchs and requiring them "to take as their sole guide the precepts of the Christian religion". The treaty was dedicated "to the Holy and Indivisible Trinity", and the Tsar insisted on creating it in Paris because it was the most irreligious of all Europe's capital cities.<sup>579</sup> Only the King of Prussia welcomed the idea. The Emperor of Austria was embarrassed, and in private agreed with his chancellor, Metternich, that Alexander was mad. On the British side, the Duke of Wellington and Castlereagh mocked it in private.<sup>580</sup>

Stella Ghervas writes that the author of the Holy Alliance "was Alexander I himself. He wrote the preliminary notes in pencil and then gave them to his Head of Chancery, Count John Capodistrias, so that he could render them in a diplomatic language. In his turn, Capodistrias passed the document to a brilliant and cultivated secretary named Alexandre Stourdza. Stourdza later provided a detailed explanation of the text of the treaty in an unpublished piece called 'Considérations sur l'acte d'alliance fraternelle et chrétienne du 14/26 septembre 1815'...

"In his 'Considérations,' Stourdza sought to demonstrate that the pact was grounded on a solid theoretical and ideological base, in order to overcome the suspicions of those who opposed the pact and to refute their objections. In his theoretical construction, Napoleon was the heir of French Revolution, and his fall the end of an epoch of social and political disorder. Referring to the recent victory of the Allies following the Hundred Days, Stourdza wrote, 'the principle of subversion against all religious and social institutions has just been slain a second time.' This European unrest found its origin, according to him, in the Seven Years' War (1765) and included the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the succeeding Napoleonic epoch. Hence the sole solution was to restore a principle of order in public life, and therefore to 'proclaim [...] the sole conservative principles, which had been too long relegated to the subordinate sphere of domestic life.' There lies the explanation for the intentional but

---

<sup>578</sup> Alan Palmer, *Alexander I*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974, p. 333.

<sup>579</sup> Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>580</sup> Zamoycki, *Rites of Peace*, pp. 520-522.

otherwise incomprehensible [!] intrusion of Christian principles into the political sphere. In fact the Tsar had already expressed that very idea nine months earlier, on December 31, 1814, in a diplomatic note that he had sent to the plenipotentiaries of the three great powers... More generally, the feeling from many contemporaries that they had just escaped a near-apocalyptic experience largely explains the wave of mysticism that washed over Europe in those years.

“Stourdza’s testimony thus confirms that the Holy Alliance did pursue a conservative, religious, and counter-revolutionary agenda. For all that, it would be a mistake to call it a reactionary or ultra-royalist manifesto. Between these two extremes, there existed not only a vast spectrum of ideas, but also profound divergences. We should sooner speak of a middle ground, a ‘defensive modernization,’ which sparked a storm of criticism from both sides...”<sup>581</sup>

The more cynical attitude of the foreign statesmen was not unexpected. After all, religion had long ceased to be seen as the basis of political life in the West. True, the monarchs protected religion as a foundation of their own monarchical power; but in the post-1815 settlement the Catholic Church received few of its lands back, which showed their true attitude to it. The fact was that Tsar Alexander was now the most powerful man in Europe, and the others could not afford to reject his religio-political project out of hand. So, led by Metternich, they set about discreetly editing the treaty of its more mystical elements until it was signed by the monarchs of Russia, Austria and Prussia (the British and the Turks opted out, as did the Pope of Rome) on September 26.

Thus the original draft read: “Conformably to the word of the Holy Scriptures, the three contracting Monarchs will remain united by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity, and considering each other as fellow countrymen, they will on all occasions, and in all places lend each other aid and assistance; and regarding themselves towards their subjects and armies as fathers of families, they will lead them, in the same fraternity with which they are animated to protect religion, peace and justice.”<sup>582</sup> But Metternich modified the first part to remove the phrase “by the bonds of a true fraternity” to read: “The three monarchs will remain united”. Again, the original draft stated that the three Powers were three provinces of a single nation. But Metternich changed this to present them as three branches of the same family.

“Metternich,” continues Ghervas, “having obviously grasped that there was an attempt to pass political reformism under the guise of religious rhetoric (both of which he disliked), had therefore been quick to temper the enthusiasm of the Tsar. His was also the paternalist idea that the monarchs were ‘benevolent fathers.’ However, the idea that Europe represented a “Christian nation” still made it into

---

<sup>581</sup> Ghervas, “Antidotes to Empire: From the Congress System to the European Union”, in John W. Boyer and Berthold Molden (eds.), *Eutropes: The Paradox of European Empire*, Paris and Chicago, 2014, pp. 58-59.

<sup>582</sup> Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-334.

the final version of the text.

“It is obvious from the original proposition that Alexander I had sought to found a European nation “essentially one” and living in peace, of which the various states would be provinces. We can easily guess the reason for Metternich’s amendments: the original wording would have united the peoples of Europe in a position, so to speak, “over the heads of the sovereigns,” while placing unprecedented constraints on the monarchs; the text would have smacked of a constitution. The original version even provided that the military forces of the respective powers would have to be considered as forming a single army – 130 years before the aborted project of the European Defense Community of the early 1950s! Even though Tsar Alexander I had initially envisaged a sort of league of nations united under the authority of the sovereigns, what eventually emerged was an alliance of kings.

“From this point of view, the pact of the Holy Alliance stemmed from a line of thought of the Enlightenment. We should keep in mind that the monarchs and ministers of the post-Napoleonic era considered themselves as heirs of that movement as a matter of course: after all, they were the direct descendants of the sovereigns Frederick II of Prussia, Catherine of Russia, and Joseph II of Austria, all of whom had surprised their epoch with their intellectual audacity and rivaled one another to host in their courts philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Kant, much to the chagrin of the conservative minds of their respective kingdoms. On the other hand, the three sovereign signatories of the Holy Alliance rejected the French Revolution with their utmost energy...”<sup>583</sup>

This was not only the beginning of a new, multilateral approach to politics: it was also the beginning of a kind of United Nations, with the great monarchical powers as the security council who pledged themselves not to take major decisions on the international stage without consulting each other. Moreover, it was a consciously *Christian* United Nations; for the powers declared themselves to be, according to the original draft, “members of a single Christian nation” – a remarkable idea in view of the fact that of the three members of the Alliance, one, Russia, was Orthodox, another, Austria, was Catholic, and the third, Prussia, was Protestant.

Another important aspect of the Holy Alliance was its anti-papism. As Ghervas writes, “the concept of a ‘Christian nation’ in Europe, an ecumenism embracing the Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox faiths was, in fact, an insidious attack aimed at the Holy See. Somewhat surprisingly, it has not been noted that the Pope of Rome, a major political actor of European history for centuries, was now being banned from the continental chess game of the Congress of Vienna and would never recover his former status.

“In fact, the statement in the treaty of the Holy Alliance that ‘the three

---

<sup>583</sup> Ghervas, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

sovereigns make up a single nation with the same Christian faith' amounted to a notice of liquidation of the thousand-year-old political system of Western Europe, which had been founded (at least ideologically) on the alliance between the Catholic Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. By putting Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy on equal footing, thus making the political organization of Christian Europe 'non-confessional,' the sovereigns of the three powers were plainly declaring that the Pope's claim to supremacy in Europe was null and void. From that angle, it takes the aspect of a backstage revolution. Napoleon had already damaged the prestige of the Sovereign Pontiff with his own sacrilegious coronation in 1804. Two years later, the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire had sealed the bankruptcy of the temporal side of the fellowship between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. In 1815, it was the turn of the spiritual side to be liquidated. As a result, the political role of the Sovereign Pontiff was reduced to that of a sovereign of an Italian state. This ideological backlash profoundly upset Pope Pius VII; therein lies the reason why the Holy See refused to sign the pact of the Holy Alliance.

"Why had the sovereigns of the great powers engaged in such a radically anti-clerical maneuver that deliberately ousted the Pope from European politics?

"... From Alexander's point of view, a Patriarch of Rome who not only considered himself independent of the sovereigns, but historically claimed to be their suzerain, was a contestant on the European political scene that had to be remorselessly shoved out of the way.

"That rather unfriendly attitude toward the Catholic Church was shared, but for entirely different reasons, by the Protestant king of Prussia (a hereditary enemy of Roman supremacy) and the sovereign of Austria—the same who had liquidated the Holy Roman Empire and crowned himself emperor of Austria under the name of Francis I. The latter was also the nephew of the archduke Joseph II (1741–90), who had applied a policy known as Josephism, aimed precisely at subordinating the Church to the State and at restraining pontifical power. Hence, beyond the mysticism of the epoch, would it be appropriate to speak of a strand of mystification in the Holy Alliance, especially when considering the amendments from a character as down-to-earth as Metternich? In any case, there was a shared interest on the part of the three Powers to put the final nail in the coffin of Papal political authority.

"In firm opposition to the Holy Alliance, there arose, naturally enough, representatives of Roman Catholic thought, such as the Jesuits, as well as Louis de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre. In defiance of all odds, they kept advocating an alliance of sovereigns under the auspices of the Pope, as well as a return to the prerogatives of the aristocratic class. It is those views that most impressed minds in France, especially the alliance of the Bourbon monarchy and the Church of Rome, despite the fact that both were now only secondary pieces on a rather complicated European chessboard. In addition, Maistre knew the Tsar well, since

he had spent several years in Saint Petersburg; if he mistrusted him, it was not for failing to know him. Maistre wrote about the Holy Alliance, even before its publication: "Let us note that the spirit behind it is not Catholic, nor Greek or Protestant; it is a peculiar spirit that I have been studying for thirty years, but to describe it here would be too long; it is enough to say that it is as good for the separated Churches as it is bad for Catholics. It is expected to melt and combine all metals; after which, the statue will be cast away." Maistre was exposing what he had rightly perceived as a cunning maneuver: by adopting the Christian religion as the guiding principle, but diluting it at the same time into a vague whole, the three sovereigns had meant to undermine the Pope's sphere of influence. By a process that our age would call 'embrace, extend, and extinguish,' they had deliberately opened the door to a European political sphere that would henceforth be free of ecclesiastical influence (though not of religion).

"Finally, the wording 'Christian family' offered yet another advantage in the geopolitical context of the time: it covered all states of Europe, but left out the Ottoman Empire, a Muslim state. Russia, which had concluded a war with Turkey only three years before, had been entertaining definite ambitions over it since the epoch of Peter the Great. Thus the Holy Alliance potentially gave the Russian Empire a free hand on the rather complex Eastern Question—in other words, the competition among the great powers to partition the territory of the declining Ottoman Empire."<sup>584</sup>

The diminution in the power of Catholicism, and the increased prestige of Orthodox Russia, helped to increase the stream of uniates returning voluntarily to Orthodoxy in the nineteenth century. Favourable conditions for this change had been created by the fall of Poland in 1815, the expulsion of the Jesuits from Russia in 1820 and the suppression of the Polish rebellion in 1830-1831. Then, in 1835, a secret committee on the uniate question was formed in St. Petersburg consisting of the uniate bishop Joseph Semashko, the real soul of the movement, Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, the over-procurator of the Holy Synod and the minister of the interior. By 1839 1,600,000 uniates had converted to Orthodoxy.

But Catholicism was not finished yet. And in the Crimean War of 1853-56 the Pope saw an opportunity to wound Russia. As A.S. Khomiakov wrote: "Whatever political bases and excuses there may be for the struggle that is convulsing Europe now, it is impossible not to notice, even at the most superficial observation, that on one of the warring sides stand exclusively peoples belonging to Orthodoxy, and on the other - Romans and Protestants, gathered around Islam." And he quoted from an epistle of the Catholic Archbishop of Paris Sibur, who assured the French that the war with Russia "is not a political war, but a holy war; not a war of states or peoples, but solely a religious war". All other reasons were "in essence no more than excuses". The true reason was "the necessity to drive out the [supposed] error of Photius [his opposition to the heretical introduction of the Filioque into the Creed]; to subdue and crush it". "That is the

---

<sup>584</sup> Ghervas, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-67.

recognized aim of this new crusade, and such was the hidden aim of all the previous crusades, even if those who participated in them did not admit it."<sup>585</sup>

## **5. Russian Intellectuals and Catholicism**

In 1871 Garibaldi's red shirts seized Rome and brought the temporal power of the papacy to an end. This was a cause of rejoicing to many, but not to the Russian diplomat, Constantine Nikolaevich Leontiev, who lamented: The Pope a prisoner! The first man of France [President Carnot] not baptized!"<sup>586</sup> The reason for his alarm was not far to find: for all its vices, and its newest heresies, such as the Infallibility of the Pope and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, the papacy was still one of the main forces in the West restraining the liberal-socialist revolution as it descended ever more rapidly down the slippery slope towards atheism...

However, conservative and anti-revolutionary though it might be, it remained true, as the Russian poet and diplomat Fyodor Tyutchev pointed out, that the revolution in western society had really begun with Pope Gregory VII in the eleventh century, who could be called both the first Protestant and the first revolutionary... Moreover, while the Vatican would never again present a direct, existential threat to the survival of Russia or Russian Orthodoxy, the increasing influence of the religious tendency known as "indifferentism" or "ecumenism" meant that Russian intellectuals continued to be influenced by Catholicism. Two nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals who took directly opposing views on Catholicism were Dostoyevsky and Soloviev...

The simultaneous defeat in 1870-71 of both the most reactionary and the most revolutionary regimes in Europe (the Papacy and the Paris Commune) raised the question: might there be a connection between these seeming opposites? Following the suggestion of some French socialist thinkers, Dostoyevsky saw a link between the two antichristian systems. "Present-day French Socialism," he wrote, "is nothing but the truest and most direct continuation of the Catholic idea, its fullest, most final consequence which has been evolved through centuries. French Socialism is nothing else than the compulsory union of mankind - an idea

---

<sup>585</sup> Khomiakov, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij* (Complete Works), Moscow, 1994, vol. II, pp. 74-75; in Selischev, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>586</sup> Leontiev, "Natsional'naiia politika kak orudie vseмирnoj revoliutsii" (National politics as a weapon of universal revolution), *Vostok, Rossia i Slaviansstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 526. Leontiev also wrote: "If I were in Rome, I should not hesitate to kiss not only the hand but also the slipper of Leo XIII... Roman Catholicism suits my unabashed taste for despotism, my tendency to spiritual authority, and attracts my heart and mind for many other reasons" (*op. cit.*, p. 529). "An interesting ecumenical remark for an Orthodox," comments Wil van den Bercken (*Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 213), "but it is not meant that way." That is, he admired the papacy for its *authoritarianism* without sharing its religious errors.



which dates back to ancient Rome and which was fully expressed in Catholicism."<sup>587</sup>

Papism, according to Dostoyevsky, was the beginning of western atheism. As Prince Myshkin says in *The Idiot* (1868): "Roman Catholicism believes that the Church cannot exist on earth without universal temporal power, and cries: Non possumus! In my opinion, Roman Catholicism isn't even a religion, but most decidedly a continuation of the Holy Roman Empire, and everything in it is subordinated to that idea, beginning with faith. The Pope seized the earth, an earthly throne and took up the sword; and since then everything has gone on in the same way, except that they've added lies, fraud, deceit, fanaticism, superstition wickedness. They have trifled with the most sacred, truthful, innocent, ardent feelings of the people, have bartered it all for money, for base temporal power. And isn't this the teaching of Antichrist? Isn't it clear from Roman Catholicism itself! Atheism originated first of all with them: how could they believe in themselves? It gained ground because of abhorrence of them; it is the child of their lies and their spiritual impotence! Atheism! In our country it is only the upper classes who do not believe, as Mr. Radomsky so splendidly put it the other day, for they have lost their roots. But in Europe vast numbers of the common people are beginning to lose their faith - at first from darkness and lies, and now from fanaticism, hatred of the Church and Christianity!"<sup>588</sup>

And since Socialism is "above all an atheistic question, the question of the modern integration of atheism", Papism is its parent, too: "Socialism, too, is the child of Catholicism and the intrinsic Catholic nature! It, too, like its brother atheism, was begotten of despair, in opposition to Catholicism as a moral force, in order to replace the lost moral power of religion, to quench the spiritual thirst of parched humanity, and save it not by Christ, but also by violence! This, too, is freedom by violence. This, too, is union through the sword and blood. 'Don't dare to believe in God! Don't dare to have property! Don't dare to have a personality of your own! Fraternité ou la mort! Two million heads!"<sup>589</sup> So akin is Socialism to Papism that Papism "will tell the people that Christ also preached everything that the Socialists are preaching to them. Again it will pervert and sell them Christ as it has sold Him so many times in the past."<sup>590</sup>

Peter Verkhovensky in *The Devils* (1871) even envisages the possibility of the Pope becoming the leader of the Socialists: "Do you know, I was thinking of delivering the world up to the Pope. Let him go barefoot and show himself to the mob, saying, 'See what they have brought me to!' and they will all follow him, even the army. The Pope on top, we all round him, and below us - the Shigalev order. All we need is that the Internationale should come to an

---

<sup>587</sup> Dostoyevsky, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij* (Complete Works), Moscow, 1914, vol. I, p. 150.

<sup>588</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, Penguin Magarshack translation, p. 585.

<sup>589</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 586.

<sup>590</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, 1877.

agreement with the Pope; this will come about. The old boy will agree at once. He can't do anything else. Mark my words."<sup>591</sup>

"The Western Church," wrote Dostoyevsky, "has distorted the image of Christ, having been transformed from a Church into a Roman state and incarnated it again in the form of the papacy. Yes, in the West there is in truth no longer Christianity and the Church, although there are still many Christians - yes, and they will never disappear. Catholicism is truly no longer Christianity, and is passing into idol-worship, while Protestantism with giant steps is passing into atheism and a slippery, shifting, inconstant (and not age-old) teaching on morality. The Empire accepted Christianity, and the Church - the Roman law and state. A small part of the Church departed into the desert and began to continue its former work: Christian communities appeared again, then monasteries. But then the remaining, huge part of the Church divided, as we know, into two halves. In the western half the state finally overcame the Church completely. The Church was annihilated and was reincarnated finally into a state. There appeared the papacy - a continuation of the ancient Roman Empire in a new incarnation."<sup>208</sup>

Dostoyevsky saw in Germany's victory over France at Sedan in 1871 an attempt to crush Socialism, and thereby Papism, and foresaw the time when the madness of Papist individualism would seek to unite itself with the madness of socialist collectivism: "By depriving France of her political existence, Prince Bismarck hopes to deliver a blow at socialism. Socialism, as a heritage of Catholicism, and France are most hateful to a genuine German. It is excusable that Germany's representatives believe that it is so easy to master socialism by merely destroying Catholicism - as its source and beginning.

"However, this is what is most probably going to happen should France fall politically: Catholicism will lose its sword, and for the first time will appeal to the people whom it has been despising for so many centuries, ingratiating itself with worldly kings and emperors. Now, however, it will appeal to the people, since there is nowhere else to go; specifically, it will appeal to the leaders of the most worldly and rebellious element of the people - the socialists. Catholicism will tell the people that Christ also preached everything the socialists are preaching to them. Once more it will pervert and sell them Christ as it has Him so many times in the past for earthly possessions, defending the rights of the Inquisition which, in the name of loving Christ, tortured men for freedom of conscience - in the name of Christ to Whom only that disciple was dear who came to Him of his free accord and not the one who had been bought or frightened.

"Catholicism sold Christ when it blessed the Jesuits and sanctioned the righteousness of 'every means for Christ's cause'. However, since time

---

<sup>591</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, August, 1880; *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij* (Complete Works), Moscow, 1984, vol. 26, pp. 151, 169. Cf. Thomas Hobbes: "The papacy is not other than the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof" (*Leviathan*).

immemorial, it has converted Christ's cause into a mere concern for its earthly possessions and its future political domination over the whole world. When Catholic mankind turned away from the monstrous image in which, at length, Christ had been revealed to them, - after many protests, reformations, etc., at the beginning of this century - endeavours arose to organize life without God, without Christ. Devoid of the instinct of a bee or an ant, unmistakably and with utmost precision constructing their hive and ant-hill, men sought to create something on the order of an unmistakable anthill. They rejected the unique formula of mankind's salvation, derived from God and announced through revelation to man: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', and substituted for it practical inferences, such as 'Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous' ('Each one for himself and God for all'), or scientific axioms, such as 'the struggle for existence'.

"Bereft of the instinct which guides animals and enables them to organize their life faultlessly, men haughtily sought to rely upon science, forgetting that for such a task as the creation of society, science is still, so to speak, in swaddles. Dreams ensued. The future tower of Babylon became the ideal but also the dread of humanity. But after these dreams there soon appeared other simple doctrines, intelligible to everybody, for instance: 'to rob the rich, to stain the world with blood, after which *somehow everything will again be settled of its own accord*.'

"Finally, even these teachers were outstripped: there appeared the doctrine of anarchy, after which - if it could be put into effect - there would again ensue a period of cannibalism, and people would be compelled to start all over again as they started some ten thousand years ago. Catholicism fully understands all this, and it will manage to seduce the leaders of the underground war. It will say to them: 'You have no centre, no order in the conduct of the work; you are a force scattered all over the world, and now, after the downfall of France [Dostoyevsky is referring to the fall of the Commune in 1871] - also an oppressed force. I shall be your rallying center, and I shall attract to you all those who still believe in me.

"One way or another, the alliance will be formed. Catholicism does not wish to die, whereas social revolution and the new social period in Europe are indubitable: two forces, unquestionably, will have to come to understanding, to unite. It stands to reason that slaughter, blood, plunder, even cannibalism would be advantageous to Catholicism. Precisely then it may hope to catch once more its fish in troubled waters, foreseeing the moment when, finally, mankind, exhausted by chaos and lawlessness, will fall into its arms. Then, once more, it will become in reality the sole and absolute 'earthly ruler and universal authority', sharing its power with no one. Thereby it will attain its ultimate goal."<sup>592</sup>

Although not an exact prophecy, this accurately identified the general trend in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For there has been an increasing tendency for the papacy, if not to identify with the revolution (although its "liberation theologians" did precisely that in Central and South America in the

---

<sup>592</sup> Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, November, 1877, pp. 910-912.

1980s), at any rate to accept many of their premises and strive to work with them rather than against them. Thus the papacy has fitted easily into the modern liberal-socialist structure of the European Union – even though, much to the Pope's chagrin, there is no mention of God in its constitution...

In *The Brothers Karamazov* (1881), Dostoyevsky underlined the link between Papism and Socialism by making the leading proponent of Socialism a Papist Inquisitor. After his disillusionment with Papism, Western man could not be satisfied with the atomic individualism of the societies that replaced it, but yearned for the brotherhood of all men in obedience to one Father that Papism provided, albeit in a perverted form. "For the chief concern of these miserable creatures," says the Inquisitor, "is not only to find something that I or someone else can worship, but to find something that all believe in and worship, and the absolutely essential thing is that they should do so *all together*. It is this need for *universal* worship that is the chief torment of every man individually and of mankind as a whole from the beginning of time. For the sake of the universal worship they have put each other to the sword..."

Over forty years later, on the death of Lenin in 1924, the Social-Revolutionary leader Victor Chernov confirmed Dostoyevsky's analysis of the relationship between Papism and Socialism when he compared Lenin to the most famous of Inquisitors: "His love of the proletariat was the same despotic, exacting, and merciless love with which, centuries ago, Torquemada burned people for their salvation..."<sup>593</sup>

Dostoyevsky's friend, the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, took a very different view of the papacy. He was attracted by its universalism and independence of national governments, which contrasted with the nationalism of the Orthodox Churches and their too close dependence on national governments. Russian Tsarism, he believed, needed a partner – and that partner should not be the Orthodox Church. It should be, he revealed in his work *La Russie et l'Eglise universelle* (1889), the papacy. As a consequence, he became a Catholic – although he returned to Orthodoxy on his deathbed.

The Orthodox Church, in Soloviev's opinion, was no longer the Universal Church, and had therefore lost the right to represent Christ. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church had a wealth of mystical contemplation, which had to be preserved. "In Eastern Christendom for the last thousand years religion has been identified with personal piety, and prayer has been regarded as the one and only religious activity. The Western church, without disparaging individual piety as the true germ of all religion, seeks the development of this germ and its blossoming into a social activity organized for the glory of God and the universal good of mankind. The Eastern prays, the Western prays and labours."

---

<sup>593</sup> Chernov, "Lenin", in *Foreign Affairs*, January-February, 2012, p. 12.

However, only a supranational spiritual power independent of the State could be a worthy partner of the State, forming the basis of a universal theocracy. For “here below, the Church has not the perfect unity of the heavenly Kingdom, but nevertheless she must have a certain real unity, a bond at once organic and spiritual which constitutes her a concrete institution, a living body and a moral individual. Though she does not include the whole of mankind in an actual material sense, she is nevertheless *universal* insofar as she cannot be confined exclusively to any one nation or group of nations, but must have an international centre from which to spread throughout the whole universe...

“Were she not one and universal, she could not serve as the foundation of the positive unity of all peoples, which is her chief mission. Were she not infallible, she could not guide mankind in the true way; she would be a blind leader of the blind. Finally were she not independent, she could not fulfill her duty towards society; she would become the instrument of the powers of this world and would completely fail in her mission...

“If the particular spiritual families which between them make up mankind are in reality to form a single Christian family, a single Universal Church, they must be subject to a common fatherhood embracing all Christian nations. To assert that there exist in reality nothing more than national Churches is to assert that the members of a body exist in and for themselves and that the body itself has no reality. On the contrary, Christ did not found any particular Church. He created them all in the real unity of the Universal Church which He entrusted to Peter as the one supreme representative of the divine Fatherhood towards the whole family of the sons of Man.

“It was by no mere chance that Jesus Christ specially ascribed to the first divine Hypostasis, the heavenly Father, that divine-human act which made Simon Bar-Jona the first social father of the whole human family and the infallible master of the school of mankind.”

For Soloviev, wrote N.O. Lossky, “the ideal of the Russian people is of [a] *religious* nature, it finds its expression in the idea of ‘Holy Russia’; the capacity of the Russian people to combine Eastern and Western principles has been historically proved by the success of Peter the Great’s reforms; the capacity of national self-renunciation, necessary for the recognition of the Pope as the Primate of the Universal Church, is inherent in the Russian people, as may be seen, among other things, from the calling in of the Varangians [?]. Soloviev himself gave expression to this characteristic of the Russian people when he said that it was ‘better to give up patriotism than conscience’, and taught that the cultural mission of a great nation is not a *privilege*: it must not dominate, but *serve* other peoples and all mankind.

“Soloviev’s Slavophil messianism never degenerated into a narrow nationalism. In the nineties he was looked upon as having joined the camp of the

Westernizers. In a series of articles he violently denounced the epigons of Slavophilism who had perverted its original conception. In the article 'Idols and Ideals', written in 1891, he speaks of 'the transformation of the lofty and all-embracing Christian ideals into the coarse and limited idols of our modern paganism... National messianism was the main idea of the old Slavophiles; this idea, in some form or other, was shared by many peoples; it assumed a pre-eminently religious and mystical character with the Poles (Towianski) and with some French dreamers of the thirties and forties (Michel, Ventra, etc.). What is the relation of such national messianism to the true Christian idea? We will not say that there is a contradiction of principle between them. The true Christian ideal can assume this national messianic form, but it becomes then very *easily pervertible* (to use an expression of ecclesiastical writers); i.e., it can easily change into the corresponding idol of anti-Christian nationalism, which did happen in fact.'...

"Soloviev struggled in his works against every distortion of the Christian ideal of general harmony; he also struggled against all the attempts made by man to satisfy his selfishness under the false pretence of serving a noble cause. Such are for instance the aims of chauvinistic nationalism. Many persons believe, Soloviev tells us, that in order to serve the imaginary interests of their people, 'everything is permitted, the aim justifies the means, black turns white, lies are preferable to truth and violence is glorified and considered as valor... This is first of all an insult to that very nationality which we desire to serve.' In reality, 'peoples flourished and were exalted only when they did not serve their own interests as a goal in itself, but pursued higher, *general* ideal goods.' Trusting the highly sensitive conscience of the Russian people, Soloviev wrote in his article, 'What is Demanded of a Russian Party?' 'If instead of doping themselves with Indian opium, our Chinese neighbors suddenly took a liking to the poisonous mushrooms which abound in the Siberian woods, we would be sure to find Russian jingos, who in their ardent interest in Russian trade, would want Russia to induce the Chinese government to permit the free entry of poisonous mushrooms into the Celestial empire... Nevertheless, every plain Russian will say that no matter how vital an interest may be, Russia's honor is also worth something; and, according to Russian standards, this honor definitely forbids a shady deal to become an issue of national politics.'

"Like Tiutchev, Soloviev dreamed of Russia becoming a Christian world monarchy; yet he wrote in a tone full of anxiety: 'Russia's life has not yet determined itself completely, it is still torn by the struggle between the principle of light and that of darkness. Let Russia become a Christian realm, even without Constantinople, a Christian realm in the full sense of the word, that is, one of justice and mercy, and all the rest will be surely added unto this.'"<sup>594</sup>

---

<sup>594</sup> Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1952, pp. 115-117.

As we have seen, Dostoyevsky disagreed with his friend on this point, considering the papacy to be, not so much a Church as a State. Nor did he agree with the doctrine of papal infallibility, which Soloviev also supported.

As Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) wrote in 1890, in his review of Soloviev's book: "A sinful man cannot be accepted as the supreme head of the Universal Church without this bride of Christ being completely dethroned. Accepting the compatibility of the infallibility of religious edicts with a life of sin, with a wicked will, would amount to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of wisdom by admitting His compatibility with a sinful mind. Khomiakov very justly says that besides the holy inspiration of the apostles and prophets, Scripture tells us of only one inspiration – inspiration of the obsessed. But if this sort of inspiration was going on in Rome, the Church would not be the Church of Christ, but the Church of His enemy. And this is exactly how Dostoyevsky defines it in his 'Grand Inquisitor' who says to Christ: 'We are not with Thee, but with him'... Dostoyevsky in his 'Grand Inquisitor' characterised the Papacy as a doctrine which is attractive exactly because of its worldly power, but devoid of the spirit of Christian communion with God and of contempt for the evil of the world..."<sup>595</sup>

As a warning against the dangers of a Russian nationalism lacking the universalist dimension of the early Slavophiles and Dostoyevsky, Soloviev's critique had value. But his attempt to tear Russia away from Constantinople and towards Rome was misguided. And it had an unhealthy influence on other writers, such as D.S. Merezhkovsky.

Thus Merezhkovsky, according to Sergius Firsov, "found it completely normal to compare Roman Catholicism headed by the Pope and the Russian kingdom headed by the Autocrat. Calling these theocracies (that is, attempts to realize the City of God in the city of man) false, Merezhkovsky pointed out that they came by different paths to the same result: the western – to turning the Church into a State, and the eastern – to engulfing the Church in the State. 'Autocracy and Orthodoxy are two halves of one religious whole,' wrote Merezhkovsky, 'just as the papacy and Catholicism are. The Tsar is not just the Tsar, the head of the State, but also the head of the Church, the first priest, the anointed of God, that is, in the final, if historically not yet realized, yet mystically necessary extent of his power – 'the Vicar of Christ', the same Pope, Caesar and Pope in one.'" <sup>596</sup>

---

<sup>595</sup> Khrapovitsky, "The Infallibility of the Pope according to Vladimir Soloviev", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 37, N 4, July-August, 1987, pp. 37, 43.

<sup>596</sup> Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh – 1918 g.)* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918), Moscow, 2002, pp. 39-40.

## **6. The Vatican and Soviet Russia**

In 1917, on the thirteenth day of the month of May, and for six months thereafter the Virgin Mary supposedly appeared to three shepherd girls in Fatima, Portugal. The girls were entrusted with “three secrets”, the second of which is the most important. This supposedly revealed that, in order to avoid terrible calamities in the world and the persecution of the Catholic Church, the Virgin will ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. If her request is granted, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace. If not, then she [Russia] will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. “The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.”

Now from the point of view of the Orthodox Saints and Holy Fathers (and even of some of the Catholic “saints”, such as John of the Cross), these visions and revelations are clear examples of demonic deception and not to be trusted. In May, 1917 it was not difficult to see that Russia was descending into chaos, and the devil used the opportunity to try and persuade people that the chaos could be averted only through the submission of Russia to his tool, the Catholic Church. Not surprisingly, the Vatican seized on these “revelations” and in 1930 pronounced them worthy of trust; and every Pope since then has been committed to belief in the Fatima phenomenon.

How did the Vatican, Russia’s age-old enemy, react to the revolution? In reality, with joy, as being a wonderful missionary opportunity seemingly blessed by the Mother of God herself in the false vision of Fatima. However, since the Vatican had always opposed communism as well as Orthodoxy, it had to hide its joy at first....

On March 12, 1919 Pope Benedict XV sent Lenin a protest against the persecutions of the Orthodox clergy, while Archbishop Ropp sent Patriarch Tikhon a letter of sympathy. The Bolshevik Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin noted with dissatisfaction this “solidarity with the servers of the Orthodox Church”. In general, however, the attitude of the Vatican to Orthodoxy was hostile to the Orthodox. In 1922 Hieromartyr Benjamin of Petrograd said to Fyodorov: “You offer us unification... and all the while your Latin priests, behind our backs, are sowing ruin amongst our flock.”

Nicholas Boyeikov writes: “In his epistle of 25 June, 1925, the locum tenens of the All-Russian Patriarchal Throne, Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, who suffered torture in Soviet exile, expressed himself on the ‘Eastern Rite’ as follows: ‘the Orthodox Christian Church has many enemies. Now they have increased their activity against Orthodoxy. The Catholics, by introducing the rites of our divine



services, are seducing the believing people – especially those among the western churches which have been Orthodox since antiquity – into accepting the unia, and by this means they are distracting the forces of the Orthodox Church from the more urgent struggle against unbelief.”<sup>597</sup>

Protodeacon Herman Ivanov-Trinadtsaty writes: “Pope Pius X (who was canonized in 1954) pronounced on the very eve of World War I, ‘Russia is the greatest enemy of the [Roman] Church.’ Therefore it is not surprising that the Roman Catholic world greeted the Bolshevik Revolution with joy. ‘After the Jews the Catholics did probably more than anyone else to organize the overthrow of tsarist power. At least they did nothing to stop it.’ Shamelessly and with great candour they wrote in Rome as soon as the Bolshevik ‘victory’ became evident: ‘there has been uncontainable pleasure over the fall of the tsarist government and Rome has not wasted any time in entering into negotiations with the Soviet government.’ When a leading Vatican dignitary was asked why the Vatican was against France during World War II, he exclaimed: ‘The victory of the Entente allied with Russia would have been as great a catastrophe for the Roman Catholic Church as the Reformation was.’ Pope Pius conveyed this feeling in his typically abrupt manner: ‘If Russia is victorious, then the schism is victorious.’...

“Even though the Vatican had long prepared for it, the collapse of the Orthodox Russian Empire caught it unawares. It very quickly came to its senses. The collapse of Russia did not yet mean that Russia could turn Roman Catholic. For this, a new plan of attack was needed. Realizing that it would be as difficult for a Pole to proselytise in Russia as for an Englishman in Ireland, the Vatican understood the necessity of finding a totally different method of battle with Orthodoxy, which would painlessly and without raising the slightest suspicion, ensnare and subordinate the Russian people to the Roman Pope. This Machiavellian scheme was the appearance of the so-called ‘Eastern Rite’, which its defenders understood as ‘the bridge by which Rome will enter Russia’, to quote an apt expression of K.N. Nikolaiev.

“This treacherous plot, which can be likened to a ship sailing under a false flag, had very rapid success in the first years after the establishment of Soviet power. This too place in blood-drenched Russia and abroad, where feverish activity was begun amongst the hapless émigrés, such as finding them work, putting their immigration status in order, and opening Russian-language schools for them and their children.

“It cannot be denied that there were cases of unmercenary help, but in the overwhelming majority of cases, this charitable work had a thinly disguised confessional goal, to lure by various means the unfortunate refugees into what seemed at first glance to be true Orthodox churches, but which at the same time commemorated the pope...

---

<sup>597</sup> *Tserkovnie Vedomosti* (Church Gazette), 1925, №№ 21-22); Boyeikov, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

“In Russia the experiment with the ‘Eastern Rite’ lasted more than ten years... The heart and soul of the papal ‘Ostpolitik’, its eastern policies, was a Jesuit, the French Bishop d’Erbigny, who was specially authorized by the pope to conduct negotiations with the Kremlin for the wide dissemination of Roman Catholicism in the Soviet Union and by the same token the supplanting of Orthodoxy in Russia and in Russian souls.

“With this in mind, d’Erbigny travelled three times to the Soviet Union on a French diplomatic passport. He consecrated several Roman Catholic hierarchs with the aim of building up a group of Russian Catholic clergymen who would be acceptable to the Soviet authorities. Let us listen to the degree of open amorality that these clerics were capable of: ‘Bolshevism is liquidating priests, desecrating churches and holy places, and destroying monasteries. Is this not where the religious mission of irreligious Bolshevism lies, in the disappearance of the carriers of schismatic thought, as it were presenting a “clean table”, a tabula rasa, which gives us the possibility of spiritual recreation.’ For those to whom it is not clear just what kind of spiritual reconstruction the Benedictine monk Chrysostom Bayer is referring to, his thoughts can be amplified by the official ...Catholic journal, *Bayrischer Kurier*: ‘Bolshevism is creating the possibility of the conversion of stagnant Russia to Catholicism.’

“No one less than the exarch of the Russian Catholics, Leonid Fyodorov, when on trial in March of 1923 along with fourteen other clergymen and one layman, pathetically testified to the sincerity of his feelings in relation to the Soviet authorities, who, Fyodorov thought later, did not fully understand what could be expected from Roman Catholicism. He explained: ‘From the time that I gave myself to the Roman Catholic Church, my cherished dream has been to reconcile my homeland with this church, which for me is the only true one. But we were not understood by the government. All Latin Catholics heaved a sigh of relief when the October Revolution took place. I myself greeted with enthusiasm the decree on the separation of Church and State... Only under Soviet rule, when Church and State are separated, could we breathe freely. As a religious believer, I saw in this liberation the hand of God.

“Let us not lose sight of the fact that all these declarations by Roman Catholics, who were quite friendly with the Soviets, were pronounced during the nightmarish period when the Soviets were trying to eradicate the Orthodox Church. Keeping in mind that Vatican diplomacy adheres to the principle that the end justifies the means, which is illustrated throughout its centuries-old history, the game which the Vatican has been playing with Moscow should be clearly understood. The essence of the matter is that Russia has become a sacrifice to two principles hostile to it, Catholicism and godless communism, which are drawn together by a curious concurrence of interests. Moscow realizes that the eradication of faith from the Russian soul is a hopeless task. As long as the Russian Church remained faithful to itself, and uncompromising towards the

godless power, courageously witnessing to the fundamental incompatibility between Christian and communist principles, the Soviet leaders were ready for two reasons to graciously study the variant of Roman Catholicism offered to them. By this means they hoped to manipulate the religiousness of the Russian soul.

“The first reason was Rome’s consistent, impeccable loyalty to the communist regime, both in the U.S.S.R. and outside it [until 1930]. Secondly, it was advantageous to the Kremlin, or simply entertaining, that the religious needs of the Russians should be satisfied by this centuries-old enemy of Orthodoxy. For their part, the Catholics were ready to close their eyes to all the atrocities of Bolshevism, including the shooting of the Roman Catholic Bishop Butkevich in April of 1923 and the imprisonment of Bishops Tseplyak, Malyetsky and Fyodorov. Six weeks later, the Vatican expressed its sorrow over the assassination of the Soviet agent Vorovsky in Lausanne! The People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs told the German Ambassador, ‘Pius XI was amiable to me in Genoa, expressing the hope that we [the Bolsheviks] would break the monopoly of the Orthodox Church in Russia, thus clearing a path for him.’

“We have discovered information of the greatest importance in the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A secret telegram № 266 of February 6, 1925 from Berlin, stated that the Soviet ambassador, Krestinsky, told Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pius XII) that Moscow would not oppose the existence of Roman Catholic bishops and a metropolitan on Russian territory. Furthermore, the Roman clergy were offered the very best conditions. Six days later, secret telegram № 284 spoke of permission being granted for the opening of a Roman Catholic seminary. Thus, while our holy New Martyrs were being annihilated with incredible cruelty, the Vatican was conducting secret negotiations with Moscow. In short, Rome attempted to gain permission to appoint the necessary bishops and even permission to open a seminary. Our evidence shows that this question was discussed once more in high circles in the autumn of 1926. In all likelihood, it had not been satisfactorily settled earlier. This might be viewed as the culmination of the unnaturally close relations between the Vatican and the Soviet government.”

In July, 1927 the deputy leader of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Sergius wrote a notorious declaration, committing his church to cooperation with the Bolsheviks. Having broken Sergius, - but not the True Russian Church, which went underground, - the Bolsheviks no longer needed the Catholics. And so, as an “unexpected and indirect result” of the declaration, writes Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, “Moscow put an end to the negotiations and the attention it was devoting to Vatican offers... The restitution of the traditional [in appearance] Russian Orthodox Church, neutralized as it were, seemed more useful to the Soviet authorities than the Vatican. From then on, the Soviets lost interest in the Vatican. Only at the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930 did the Vatican finally admit that it had suffered a political defeat and began vociferously to condemn the

Bolshevik crimes. It had somehow not noticed them until 1930. Only in 1937 did Pope Pius XI release the encyclical Divini Redemptoris (Divine Redeemer), which denounced communism..."<sup>598</sup>

---

<sup>598</sup> Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, "The Vatican and Russia", <http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/new.htm>. See also Oleg Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow: Rodnik, 1998, pp. 464-465.

## **7. The Vatican and Poland**

Although, as a result of the revolution, Russia was not in direct danger from the Vatican in the inter-war period, this was not the case with regard to the Orthodox populations in two countries closely linked to Russia – Poland and Yugoslavia. Poland was particularly important since most of the Orthodox population there were Russians, and the Polish Church was canonically part of the Russian Church.

Immediately Poland acquired independence from Russia, during the First World War and the Russian revolution, its old hatred of Russia manifested itself again and the persecution of the Orthodox restarted. Thus already on October 22, 1919 the Poles had ordered 497 Orthodox churches and chapels, which had supposedly been seized from the Catholics in the past, to be returned to the Catholic Church. The nuns of the great missionary monastery of Lesna were forced to flee, first to Bessarabia, then Serbia, and finally France.

Again, in Turkovichi in Kholm region there had been for centuries the miraculous Turkovitskaya Icon of the Mother of God cared for by a convent of nuns. In 1915 the nuns were forced to flee to Moscow, and the icon perished during the revolution. Meanwhile, in 1918, writes Archbishop Athanasius, "the Poles occupied the monastery and turned it into an orphanage under the direction of Polish nuns. The Orthodox were strictly forbidden to enter the monastery. Upon return from exile, the Orthodox inhabitants of Turkovichi built with their own means a small chapel in the cemetery not far from the monastery and ordered from the local artist and iconographer, Zinya, a copy of the miraculous icon, adorning it with a large kiot (shrine) and placing it in the church. The people heard of this and began to make massive pilgrimages to Turkovichi in order to venerate the sacred 'Turkovitskaya' Icon as one equal to the original. Thus the feast day of Turkovichi was restored and drew numerous pilgrims on the July 2/15 date."<sup>599</sup>

Then the Poles tried to destroy the links between the Russian Orthodox in Poland and their Mother Church in Russia by creating an autocephalous Polish Church. Thus in 1921 Patriarch Tikhon appointed Archbishop Seraphim (Chichagov) to the see of Warsaw, but the Poles, whose armies had defeated the Red Army the year before, did not grant him entry into the country. So on September 27 the Patriarch was forced to accept the Poles' candidate, Archbishop George (Yaroshevsky) of Minsk. However, he appointed him his exarch in Poland, not metropolitan of Warsaw (that title remained with Archbishop Seraphim). Moreover, he refused Archbishop George's request for autocephaly on the grounds that very few members of the Polish Church were Poles and the Polish dioceses were historically indivisible parts of the Russian Church. Instead, he

---

<sup>599</sup> Archbishop Athanasius, "The Tragedy of Orthodoxy in Kholm: Eternal be its memory!", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 34, № 1 (January-February, 1984), pp. 34-35.

granted the Polish Church autonomy within the Russian Church.

On January 24, 1922 Archbishop George convened a Council including Archbishops Dionysius (Valedinsky) and Panteleimon (Rozhnovsky). Under pressure from the authorities, Bishop Vladimir also joined them. Pekarsky, an official of the ministry of religious confessions, tried to make the Russian hierarchs sign the so-called "Temporary Rules", which the ministry had drawn up and which envisaged far-reaching government control over the Orthodox Church in Poland. On January 30 the "Temporary Rules" were signed by Archbishops George and Dionysius, but not by Archbishop Panteleimon and Bishop Vladimir. On the same day Patriarch Tikhon issued a decree transferring Archbishop George to the see of Warsaw and raising him to the rank of metropolitan; for it was clear that the Poles would never grant entrance into Warsaw to Metropolitan Seraphim (Chichagov), who had the reputation of being an extreme rightist. However, the titular promotion of Archbishop George by no means signified that the patriarch supported his intentions, for in the decrees there is no mention of ecclesiastical autocephaly, nor of exarchal rights. Consequently, as was confirmed by the patriarch in 1925, he was simply one of the diocesan bishops in Poland, and not metropolitan "of all Poland".

Liudmilla Koeller writes: "The Polish authorities restricted the Orthodox Church, which numbered more than 3 million believers (mainly Ukrainians and Byelorussians).<sup>600</sup> In 1922 a council was convoked in Pochaev which was to have declared autocephaly, but as the result of a protest by Bishop Eleutherios [Bogoyavlensky, of Vilnius] and Bishop Vladimir (Tikhonitsky), this decision was not made. But at the next council of bishops, which gathered in Warsaw in June, 1922, the majority voted for autocephaly, with only Bishops Eleutherios and Vladimir voting against. A council convoked in September of the same year 'deprived Bishops Eleutherios and Vladimir of their sees. In December, 1922, Bishop Eleutherios was arrested and imprisoned.'<sup>601</sup>

Eleutherios was later exiled to Lithuania. Two other Russian bishops, Panteleimon (Rozhnovsky) and Sergius (Korolev), were also deprived of their sees. The three dissident bishops were then expelled from Poland by the Catholic authorities. In November, 1923, Metropolitan George was killed by an opponent of his church politics, Archimandrite Smaragd (Laytshenko), and was succeeded by Metropolitan Dionysius "with the agreement of the Polish government and the confirmation and blessing of his Holiness Meletius IV [Metaxakis]". Patriarch Tikhon rejected this act as uncanonical. On November 13, 1924 Patriarch Gregory

---

<sup>600</sup> Already on October 22, 1919 the Poles had ordered 497 Orthodox churches and chapels, which had supposedly been seized from the Catholics in the past, to be returned to the Catholic Church. (V.M.)

<sup>601</sup> Koeller, "Kommentarii k pis'mu Arkhiepiskopa Rizhskago i Latvijskago Ioanna Arkhiepiskopu Vilyenskomu i Litovskomu Elevferiu ot 2 noiabria 1927 g." (Commentary on the Letter of Archbishop

John of Riga and Latvia to Archbishop Eleutherios of Vilnius and Lithuania), *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'* (Church Life), №№. 3-4, May-June-July-August, 1992, pp. 56-57; Monk Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

VII signed a *Tomos* "on the recognition of the Orthodox Church in Poland as autocephalous".

The *Tomos* significantly declared: "The first separation from our see of the Kievan Metropolia and from the Orthodox Metropolias of Latvia and Poland, which depended on it, and also their union to the holy Moscow Church, took place by no means in accordance with the prescription of the holy canons, nor was everything observed that had been established with regard to the complete ecclesiastical autonomy of the Kievan metropolitan who bears the title of exarch of the Ecumenical Throne". Hereby the pro-Catholic (and Masonic) Patriarch Meletius indirectly laid claim to Ukraine as his canonical territory, in spite of the fact that it had been under Russian rule for two-and-a-half centuries. And yet, in contradiction with that, he affirmed as the basis of his grant of autocephaly to the Polish Church the fact that "the order of ecclesiastical affairs must follow political and social forms".

The Polish government continued to persecute the Orthodox. Thus V.I. Alexeyev and F. Stavrou write: "Usually Soviet border zones were very thoroughly communised. The churches there were closed. When a part of Poland became Soviet territory and a border zone, Soviet power was forced to review its usual policy. It was too risky to start large-scale religious persecutions and arouse the displeasure of the populace in the presence of the German army on the other side of the border. It was necessary to take into account the fact – which was beneficial in the given circumstances for Soviet power – of the Polish authorities' discrimination against the Orthodox Church. Before the beginning of the Second World War the Poles had closed hundreds of Orthodox churches on their territory on the grounds that the Tsarist government had in 1875 returned these churches from the unia to Orthodoxy. The Polish government considered the return of the uniates to Orthodoxy an act of violence, and they in their own way restored justice by means of violence, which, needless to say, elicited protests even from the Catholic and Uniate churches.

"The results of these measures of the Polish government were such that, for example, in the region of Kholm out of 393 Orthodox churches existing in 1914, by 1938 there remained 227, by 1939 – 176, and by the beginning of the war – 53 in all.<sup>602</sup> Particularly disturbing was the fact that, of the cult buildings taken away from the Orthodox, 130 churches, 10 houses of prayer and 2 monasteries were simply destroyed."<sup>603</sup>

---

<sup>602</sup> In June and July of 1938 150 village churches visited by Ukrainian Orthodox were demolished. On July 16 the Polish Church issued a memorandum on the event, as did the MP on the same day. For further details of the persecution, see Danilushkin, M.B (ed.) *Istoria Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Orthodox Church), St. Petersburg: "Voskresenie", 1997, vol. I, p. 588; K.N. Nikolaiev, "'Unia' i vostochnij obriad" (The 'Unia' and the Eastern Rite), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), № 6 (1411), March 15/28, 1990. Among the buildings destroyed was the cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky (in 1927), and the Orthodox cathedrals in Liublin, Kalisha, Vlotslavka, Plotzk and Koltsy (Monk Benjamin, part 1, op. cit., p. 175). (V.M.)

<sup>603</sup> Alexeyev and Stavrou, "Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' na Okkupirovannoj Nemtsami

The persecution of Orthodoxy by the Poles continued well into the war. Thus Archbishop Athanasius writes: "During the terrible years of 1943-1945 during the Second World War Polish bandits attacked the peaceful Orthodox inhabitants at night, slaughtered them, burned their homes, and brought a reign of terror and fear to these Orthodox people. In this tragedy hundreds of thousands of Orthodox people who inhabited the four districts of Grubeshovsky, Tomashevsky, Zamoisky, and Bielgoraisky perished at the hands of the Poles."<sup>604</sup>

After the Soviet victory in the war, it was the turn of the Soviets and the Sovietized Moscow Patriarchate to persecute the Catholics. Towards the end of the war it was suggested to the uniate episcopate in Western Ukraine that it simply "liquidate itself". When all five uniate bishops refused, in April, 1945, they were arrested. Within a month a clearly Soviet-inspired "initiative movement" for unification with the MP headed by Protopresbyter G. Kostelnikov appeared. By the spring of 1946 997 out of 1270 uniate priests in Western Ukraine had joined this movement. On March 8-10 a uniate council of clergy and laity meeting in Lvov voted to join the Orthodox church and annul the Brest unia with the Roman Catholic Church of 1596. Those uniates who rejected the council were forced underground. Similar liquidations of the uniate churches took place in Czechoslovakia and Romania... Central Committee documents show that the whole procedure was controlled by the first secretary of the Ukrainian party, Nikita Khrushchev, who in all significant details sought the sanction of Stalin.

## **8. Catholic-Orthodox Ecumenism and "Nikodimovschina"**

By the time of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in 1945, the official church of Russia – the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), as it is now called – was a complete slave of the Bolsheviks. Its attitude to Catholicism was strictly determined by what came to be called the KGB, and the Department of Religious Affairs in the KGB; and this was in turn determined by Stalin. The True Church of Russia continued to exist outside Russia (ROCOR) and in the catacombs of Soviet Russia, but had no influence on the decisions of the official church.

In 1948 the World Council of Churches (WCC) was founded in Amsterdam with the participation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and several other Local Orthodox Churches. The MP, in obedience to its KGB masters, not only refused to join the WCC but also denounced it as a creature of the Vatican and Anglo-American imperialism. This anti-ecumenist attitude continued to prevail in the MP until the late 1950s and the pontificate of Pope John XXIII, who convened the ground-breaking Second Vatican Council, which introduced ecumenism into the Roman Catholic bloodstream. The Orthodox were now "separated brethren"

---

Territorii" (The Russian Orthodox Church on German-Occupied Territory), *Russkoe Vozrozhdenie* (Russian Regeneration), 1980 (IV), № 12, pp. 122-124.

<sup>604</sup> Archbishop Athanasius, op. cit.



rather than schismatics and heretics, and the Popes were now willing to enter into friendly relations with them – although whether this was simply the wolf putting on sheep's clothing remained to be seen... Moreover, in December, 1964 Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople met in Jerusalem and supposedly “lifted the anathemas” of 1054 between the two churches.

ROCOR in the person of her new first-hierarchy, Metropolitan Philaret of New York, reacted with a series of “sorrowful epistles” condemning the betrayal of Orthodoxy that Athenagoras and other leading hierarchs of the Orthodox world were carrying out. St. Philaret insisted that the Orthodox Church was the only True Church, and the Catholics remained outside and in heresy until and unless they repented of their heresies. Large parts of the Orthodox world sympathized with the position of St. Philaret, although most of them remained in communion with Athenagoras.

The response of the KGB was quite different. Abandoning its anti-ecumenist policy, it ordered the MP to enter the WCC and send observers to the Vatican Council. The aim, undoubtedly, was not ecclesiastical, but political: to infiltrate western church life with Soviet agents, and to influence western church gatherings in a pro-Soviet direction... The most important KGB agent involved in the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue was Archbishop Nikodim (Rotov) of Yaroslavl and Rostov, agent “Sviatoslav”. In 1961 he was sent, together with another important agent of influence living in England, Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh, to the New Delhi General Assembly of the World Council of Churches. From this time he rose very fast through the ranks of the hierarchy until he became metropolitan of Leningrad and the real power behind the throne in the Russian Church.

Alexander Soldatov writes: “The most vivid supporter of the ‘reunion’ between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in the whole of history was Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) – the spiritual father and protector of the present Patriarch Cyril. In the Moscow Patriarchate it is widely believed that he was a secret cardinal, and also the prophecy of Blessed Pelagia of Ryazan addressed to Nikodim: ‘You will die like a dog at the feet of your pope’. The metropolitan really did die at the age of 48 during a reception by Pope John-Paul I [in 1978]. In spite of his young age by hierarchical standards, Nikodim did a great deal. He was the first in the history of the Russian Church to serve with the Catholics, absorbed the Catholic mass, practiced spiritual exercises according to the method of Ignatius Loyola, and idolized pontiffs, especially the ‘red pope’, John XXIII, to whom he devoted his master’s dissertation. He went to the Vatican every year; from 1968 he began to take with him Volodya Gundiaev, the present patriarch. In 1969, when Patriarch Alexis I was dying, Nikodim was able to push through the Synod the decision to make it obligatory for Orthodox priests to give communion to Catholics ‘in the case of mortal danger’. This decision was condemned even by the ecumenically-minded Greeks [and condemned as “heretical” by the Russian Church Abroad in 1971].

“The Russian émigré and well-known theologian Archbishop Basil (Krivoshein) explained this tendency as follows: ‘Metropolitan Nikodim was drawn to Catholicism above all by the idea he had of it as a powerful, strictly disciplined, single Church. In vain did they tell him many times that such a picture did not correspond to contemporary reality... Metropolitan Nikodim was in no way willing to renounce his conviction! It was the external appearance that worked on him.’”<sup>605</sup>

Nikodim’s links with the Vatican went much further than an intellectual affinity. He was in fact a high-ranking Jesuit and secret Vatican bishop! This at first sight unlikely hypothesis gains credibility from two witnesses. The first is from the True Orthodox hieromonk Fr. Tikhon Kozushin: “In 1989 I and several other Orthodox ‘informals’ were invited to lunch at the French embassy. Among other guests there was an elderly man from France of Czech origin. He introduced himself as the director of a Catholic boarding-school in Medon, a suburb of Paris and a high-ranking officer of the Jesuit order. And then he said that Metropolitan Nikodim was also a secret-official officer of the order who was quite close to the Pope.”<sup>606</sup>

The second witness is Fr. Michael Havryliv, a Russian priest who was secretly received into the Catholic Church in 1973. Fr. Serge Keleher writes: “The Capuchin priest told Havryliv that Metropolitan Nicodemus [of Leningrad] was secretly a Catholic bishop, recognized by Rome with jurisdiction from Pope Paul VI throughout Russia. This assertion is not impossible – but neither is it entirely proved.

“On September 6 1975 Havryliv made a sacramental general Confession before Metropolitan Nicodemus, who then accepted Havryliv’s monastic vows and profession of Faith to the Apostolic See and the Pope of Rome. Kyr Nicodemus commanded Havryliv to order his monastic life according to the Jesuit Constitutions, and presented him with a copy of this document in Russian. This was all done privately; four days later the Metropolitan tonsured Havryliv a monk. On 9 October Kyr Nicodemus ordained Havryliv to the priesthood, without requiring the oaths customary for Russian Orthodox candidates to Holy Orders.

“In 1977 Havryliv was reassigned to the Moscow Patriarchate’s archdiocese of L’viv and Ternopil... In Havryliv’s final interview with Kyr Nicodemus, the Metropolitan of Leningrad ‘blessed me and gave me instructions to keep my Catholic convictions and do everything possible for the growth of the Catholic cause, not only in Ukraine, but in Russia. The Metropolitan spoke of the practice of his predecessors – and also asked me to be prudent.’”<sup>607</sup>

---

<sup>605</sup> Soldatov, “Sviatishij Posol” (His All-Holiness the Envoy), *Novaia Gazeta*, February 9, 2016.

<sup>606</sup> Kozushin, Facebook, February 12, 2016.

<sup>607</sup> S. Keleher, *Passion and resurrection – the Greek Catholic Church in Soviet Ukraine 1939–1989*, L’viv: Stauropegion, 1993, pp. 101–102.

These words indicate the truth behind the mask of the Vatican's ecumenism; and the fact that Havryliv was re-ordained by Nikodim show that Rome accepted the sacraments of the Orthodox for only as long as it suited her. The Orthodox were, according to Vatican II, not heretics, but "separated brethren". However, the "separated brethren" still had to return in repentance to their father, the Pope...

The intriguing question is: which master was Nikodim really serving – the Soviets or the Vatican? His pro-Soviet statements on the international stage were notorious. But his love of Catholicism also seems to have been sincere.

In any case, the Catholics with their "liberation theology" were moving ever closer to communism, while Nikodim was rushing to meet them from the other direction. Thus Soldatov writes: "Nikodim's sympathies with Catholicism were interwoven with a very specific 'theology of communism'. He considered the Soviet socialist system to be the closest to Christianity and dreamed of a powerful Orthodox USSR.

"A group of church dissidents addressed the Local Council of the ROC of the MP in 1971, at which Nikodim was almost elected patriarch. Their lengthy address 'On the newly-appeared false teaching of Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov)' called this teaching 'apocalyptic religious communism'..."

Now just as the new phenomenon of Catholic-Orthodox ecumenism created problems for the Orthodox Church's conception of herself as exclusively the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, so did it create problems for traditional Catholic believers, who not only believed that it was the Roman Church that was the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, but also that the Mother of God had promised at Fatima to "convert" Russia, calling on the Pope to "consecrate" her to her Immaculate Heart. Thus one of the leaders of the "Blue Army" of Fatima believers, Fr. Nicholas Gruner, writes: "God asked for the consecration of a specific country – Russia. Now, centuries ago, Russia was known as Holy Mother Russia. It had been, so to speak, consecrated to God, but the Catholics of that country fell into schism not so much directly but through the bishops – between them and Rome. The Catholics of Constantinople fell into schism in 1054 and people from Russia followed suit over time. They have been separated from the True Church ever since. Also, Russia was, in a sense, 'consecrated' to the devil in 1917 to be the instrument of atheistic Communism and its worldwide war against God; to deny God's existence, to fight God in every way.

"Thus God calls for a public reparation, a solemn ceremony by the Pope and the bishops of the world consecrating Russia to the Immaculate Heart – to call people back to the service of God."

However, no Pope has yet specifically consecrated Russia. In fact, when Pope

John Paul II consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1984 he specifically acknowledged that this was not the consecration of Russia.

Another Fatima fanatic, Atila Sinke Guimaraes, writes: "From 1917 until today, the schismatic Russian Church has not changed any of its erroneous doctrines on the Holy Trinity, Papal infallibility, and the immaculate Conception of Mary. It also sustains the same spirit of arrogance towards Rome that it has held for the last 1,000 years".

Now it will be immediately apparent that this is the old-fashioned, pre-Vatican II Roman Catholicism speaking. The modern, ecumenist Vatican would never say that Russia has "separated from the True Church" or that it was "schismatic". Such language would ruin its ecumenist diplomacy with the Moscow Patriarchate. Of course, in his heart the present Pope may think like the Fatima fanatics, and in practice the Vatican allows this old-fashioned kind of thinking to coexist with the newer spirit of ecumenism. But the fact is that the cult of the Fatima phenomenon and the Vatican's present ecumenist strategy in relation to Russia are incompatible – which may explain the tensions between the Fatima fanatics and the Pope over the "Third Secret" and other questions...

## **9. The Fall of Communism**

Whatever the Vatican hoped to achieve through its policy of ecclesiastical détente with the Moscow Patriarchate, it must have known that it could achieve little as long as the Soviet regime remained in power and the restrictions on all religions remained in place. But that regime had looked immovable in the 1970s. However, in 1978 the Vatican elected the first Pope from Eastern Europe, the Polish Karol Wojtyła, or John-Paul II, who in keeping with his Polish roots and experience was sincerely anti-communist. And in 1981 Ronald Reagan entered office in Washington as the first American president who seriously aimed at the overthrow of communism. The alliance of these two men, followed by the coming to power in the Soviet Union of a real reformer, Michael Gorbachev, changed the political landscape dramatically.

There is a hypothesis that the Polish Pope was brought to power, at least in part, through the activity of the famous anti-Soviet Russian dissident, Fr. Gleb Yakunin. Lev Regelson writes: "After Pope John-Paul I said of him 'This is a person from whom I can learn how one must love the Church', it was almost guaranteed that the following Pope would be pro-Soviet... [Fr. Gleb Yakunin] sat down to write a letter to the Vatican in which he exposed the antichristian activity of Metropolitan Nikodim. I know all this at first hand, because I helped him in his work on this letter. Finally, it was read out at the Conclave for the election of the new Pope, and produced such a powerful impression – in the words of one of the cardinals passed on to Fr. Gleb – that the Polish cardinal Wojtyła was elected as Pope. He was a convinced 'anti-communist', who knew of the methods of the Soviet secret service from personal experience. Many

investigators had supposed, with good reason, that the 27-year pontificate of John-Paul II played a decisive role in the beginning of the weakening of Soviet global expansion, and thereby in the fall of the USSR, which without this expansion lost 'the meaning of its existence'..."<sup>608</sup>

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that Pope John-Paul II introduced important changes into Vatican diplomacy, abandoning the policy of peaceful co-existence and even co-habitation with the Soviet State and Church that had characterized the reigns of his predecessors. Thus he succeeded, with the help of the Polish trade union Solidarnost and the American CIA, in fatally weakening the communist regime in his native land; and when Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the whole of the Soviet power structure in Eastern Europe began to totter. The Vatican saw its chance, and began a more aggressive – although still outwardly "eirenic" and ecumenist – approach to Russia. Thus in November, 1987, the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrius went to Rome and concelebrated with the Pope (up to but not including communion from a common chalice. At this point it seemed as if nothing could prevent the full union of the Orthodox Churches with Rome...

But while the Pope's ecumenism was welcome in Russia, his anti-communism was not – at least in the eyes of the KGB agents in cassocks who constituted the leaders of Russian Orthodoxy. Thus in 1986 Patriarch Pimen publicly criticized the Pope for criticizing socialism and dialectical materialism. "We speak out," he said, "for the cooperation of Christians, Marxists and all people of good will... which only increases our perplexity at those sections of the recent Encyclical of Pope John-Paul II, Dominum et vivificantam which are devoted to materialism and Marxist doctrine.... [The encyclical] contains elements directed towards the division and opposition of Christians and Marxists... In the encyclical an attempt is made to analyze the system of materialism... as an ideology... It is quite obvious that such a combined application of materialist doctrine to life can be found first of all in the socialist states and countries, which have chosen the socialist path of development... It is precisely in these countries that the creation of a new life by the efforts of believers and unbelievers working together is being realized... This reality, as we understand it, contradicts those positions of the encyclical in which it is affirmed that materialism as a system of thought has as its culmination – death... Insofar as 'signs of death' are indicated in relation 'to the dark shadow of materialist civilization', the impression is created, in the context of a critique of Marxist doctrine, that in all this the states and people who follow the socialist path of development are guilty... It remains to express our profound sadness at such a position."<sup>609</sup>

Even in an age distinguished by unheard-of betrayals of Orthodoxy, this

---

<sup>608</sup> Regelson, personal communication on his Facebook page, January 24, 2015, [https://www.facebook.com/lregelson/posts/981429488551934?comment\\_id=983137605047789&offset=0&total\\_comments=96&notif\\_t=feed\\_comment\\_reply](https://www.facebook.com/lregelson/posts/981429488551934?comment_id=983137605047789&offset=0&total_comments=96&notif_t=feed_comment_reply).

<sup>609</sup> *Zhurnal Moskovskoj Patriarkhii* (The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), № 10, 1986.

amazes one by its audacity: the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church officially defending the doctrine of materialism!!!

A critical point was reached in the millennial year of the Baptism of Rus' in 1988. Since the Baptism of Rus' in 988 had taken place when the Eastern and Western Churches were in full communion, this festivity might have been expected to have ecumenical potential. However, the nationalist revival had begun in the Baltic States, and the Russian secular and ecclesiastical authorities feared that if the Pope were invited to the country, his presence might provide a focus for separatist sentiment in the Baltic and Ukraine as it had in Poland earlier in the decade.

The Achilles' heel of Soviet ecclesiastical diplomacy was the Western Ukraine, where Stalin had forcibly "converted" the majority uniate or Greek Catholic population into the Moscow Patriarchate at the council of Lvov in 1946. The uniates were Catholic through their submission to the Pope, but Orthodox in their ritual and historical ancestry. In other circumstances and in earlier centuries, they might have been happy to return to the Orthodoxy of their Fathers, from which the Poles had separated them at the false unia of Brest-Litovsk in 1596. However, Stalin's heavy-handed approach to church unity had only alienated them even further from Orthodoxy and the Russians. Another important factor was the fact that the Moscow Patriarchate recruited a large proportion of its clergy from the Western Ukraine (Stalin had killed most of the clergy in the other regions of the country in the previous thirty years), and was therefore highly sensitive to the possible defection of large numbers of clergy in that region.

Now when Gorbachev came to power, the uniates who had resisted absorption into the Moscow Patriarchate came out of their catacombs and began agitating for the legalization of their Church. They were supported, surprisingly, by the chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs, Constantine Kharchev, who insisted that local authorities keep the law in their dealings with believers and suggested the legalization of the uniates and the free election of bishops. This roused the patriarchate and members of the Ideology department of the Central Committee to complain about Kharchev to the Supreme Soviet, and he was removed in June, 1989.

The ferment in the Western Ukraine also motivated the Moscow hierarchs to refuse the request of Pope John Paul II to attend the festivities commemorating the millennium of the Baptism of Russia by St. Vladimir of Kiev in 1988. So they offered him an invitation on condition he did not visit the Western Ukraine. The Pope refused this offer. He pointed out, correctly, that in 988 there had been no schism between Eastern and Western Christianity, so his attendance was natural, especially in the contemporary climate of inter-Christian ecumenism. But Moscow feared that the Pope's visit would elicit a stampede of conversions from Orthodoxy to Catholicism, not only in the Western Ukraine, but also in the heartland of Russia. Not the least of the attractions of Catholicism for many

Russians, especially intellectuals, was the fact that the Pope was clearly an independent hierarch, whereas the Moscow hierarchs were “KGB agents in cassocks”, completely dependent on the whims of their communist bosses. Ecumenism was all very well, but it could not be allowed to undermine the power of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union!

However, the tide of liberalization could not be stopped, and in January, 1990, just after Gorbachev met the Pope in Rome in order to try and stem the tide, the uniates finally achieved legalization for their church. Moreover, even before they had recovered their freedom in law, the uniates started taking over churches in Western Ukraine which they considered to be theirs by right. By December, 1991, 2167 nominally Orthodox parishes had joined the Uniates.

Deprived of the help of the local authorities, who were on the side of the uniates, and discredited by its associations with communism, the MP seemed helpless to stop the rot. One reason for this was that for many years the patriarchate had been teaching its seminarians, a large proportion of whom came from the Western Ukraine, that the Orthodox and the Catholics were “sister churches”. For 60% of those who joined the uniates were graduates of the Leningrad theological schools founded by that KGB Agent, Orthodox Metropolitan and Catholic bishop, Nikodim...

Relations between the Orthodox and Catholics continued to deteriorate. In March, 1990 the Uniates withdrew from quadripartite discussions between the Latin-rite Roman Catholics, the Uniates, the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. When the red flag came down for the last time from over the Kremlin in December, 1991, the way seemed open for a repeat of the Catholic conquest of Moscow in the early seventeenth century, spearheaded once again by a Pole...

But then something unexpected happened. Along with the Jesuits and the Freemasons and the Protestant missionaries that poured into newly-liberated Russia from the West, there also came the Russian Church Abroad, the so-called “White Russian” Church. This Church had long been a thorn in the side of the Moscow Patriarchate. Fiercely anti-communist, it was also anti-ecumenist and anti-Catholic. And although the numbers of its adherents in Russia remained small, and its attempt to unseat and replace the Moscow Patriarchate failed, its ideological influence continued to increase throughout the 1990s. Anti-ecumenism and anti-Catholicism grew in Russia, and even found adherents among the hierarchy. True, the patriarchate remained in the World Council of Churches, and ecumenist meetings with leading Catholics continued – but the Pope was still not invited to Moscow...

Indeed, the Russian Orthodox were becoming more defensive in relation to the Catholics, who were making inroads, not only in the Western Ukraine, but also

much further east. Thus in November, 1991, as Roman Catholic bishoprics in the former Soviet Union multiplied, the new patriarch, Alexis II (Ridiger), said in London that the Vatican had broken certain non-proselytism agreements, and that a flock of no more than 300 Catholics in Novosibirsk did not justify the creation of a bishopric there.<sup>610</sup> The idea was becoming popular that each of the two Churches had their own "canonical territory" – the West for the Catholics, and the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for the Orthodox – and that ecumenical good manners presupposed no "trespassing" on each other's territory.

Thus in March, 1992, the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches met in Constantinople and issued a communiqué that more or less renounced missionary work. After condemning the work of Catholic Uniates and Protestant fundamentalists in Orthodox countries, they went on to "remind all that every form of proselytism – to be distinguished from evangelization and mission – is absolutely condemned by the Orthodox. Proselytism, practiced in nations already Christian, and in many cases even Orthodox, sometimes through material enticement and sometimes by various forms of violence, poisons the relations among Christians and destroys the road towards their unity. Mission, by contrast, carried out in non-Christian countries and among non-Christian peoples, constitutes a sacred duty of the Church, worthy of every assistance" (point 4).

Here a dishonourable deal was being proposed: if you refrain from proselytising in Orthodox countries, we will not receive converts in western countries. Of course, this renunciation of proselytism among western heretics had been implicit in all the Orthodox leaders' actions in ecumenical forums since the 1960s. But it still came as a shock to see "World Orthodoxy" (as opposed to the True Orthodox Churches) renouncing the hope of conversion and therefore salvation for hundreds of millions of westerners. Here the ecumenical "Orthodox" renounced the first commandment of the Lord to His Church after the Resurrection: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28.19-20).

In spite of this rather touchy defensiveness, ecumenical dialogues and unions intensified and multiplied in the early 1990s. In 1990 the Orthodox signed a Union with the Monophysites at Chambésy in Switzerland. In 1991 Patriarch Alexis gave a famously conciliatory – and from a theological point of view, treacherous and heretical – speech to the Rabbis of New York. Meanwhile, he began to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards the uniate Catholics of the West Ukraine, and at the March, 1992 meeting he strongly resisted the call by Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem for a cessation of all dialogue between the Orthodox and the Vatican. Finally, in 1994 at Balamand in the Lebanon, the delegates of all the Local Churches except Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Jerusalem signed an agreement with the Catholics, according to which the Orthodox and

---

<sup>610</sup> Oxana Antic, "New Structures for the Catholic Church in the USSR", *Report on the USSR*, vol. 3, № 21, May 24, 1991.



the Catholics were declared to be “two lungs” of the same body (with the Monophysites as a “third lung”?). “On each side it is acknowledged that what Christ has entrusted to His Church – the profession of the apostolic faith, participation in the same sacraments, the apostolic succession of bishops, and, above all, the one priesthood celebrating the one Sacrifice of Christ – cannot be considered to be the exclusive property of one of our Churches.” “All rebaptism [of penitent Catholics in the Orthodox Church] is prohibited.” The Orthodox Church “recognizes the Catholic Church in her entirety as a sister Church, and indirectly recognizes also the Oriental Catholic Churches” (the uniates). “Special attention should be given on both sides to the preparation and education of future priests with regard to the new ecclesiology, (that they may) be informed of the apostolic succession of the other Church and the authenticity of its sacramental life, (so that) the use of history in a polemical manner (may be avoided)”.

In 1997 the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew went even further, extolling the widest possible toleration: “Orthodox Christian and modernist, Protestant and modernist, Jew and modernist, Catholic and modernist: however we worship, as long as we abide in our faith and unite it to our works in the world, we bring the living and always timely message of Divine wisdom into the modern world.”<sup>611</sup> On November 30, 1998, referring to the representatives of the Pope, he said: “In view of the fact that one Church recognizes the other Church as a locus of grace, proselytization of members from one Church to the other is precluded.”<sup>612</sup> This elicited protests in Greece and Mount Athos, but Patriarch Bartholomew forced the protestors to back down...

All this ecumenical activity on the highest official level could not fail to have consequences lower down the hierarchical ladders of the Orthodox Churches. Russian Orthodox bishops in particular regularly gave communion to Catholics.

Thus Liudmilla Perepiolkina writes: “In 1994 the Bishops’ Council of the MP left practically all matters concerning communication with the non-Orthodox to the personal discretion of its bishops and clergy, merely pointing out to them the undesirability of bewildering their flock.

“The instances of Protestants partaking of Holy Communion, unprecedented, in the MP, have now become a regular phenomenon, at least in the Novgorod diocese, where its ruling Archbishop Lev [Tserpitsky] openly admits Protestants and Catholics to Communion in the ancient Cathedral of St. Sophia in the city of Novgorod. In this and similar instances the obvious motivation is undoubtedly the material benefit gained as a result of attracting foreign tourists, along with their dollars, pounds and marks, into the Patriarchate’s churches...”<sup>613</sup>

---

<sup>611</sup> Patriarch Bartholomew, Address at Emory University at the Presidential Medal award ceremony, October 31, 1997.

<sup>612</sup> *Ekklesiastiki Alitheia* (Ecclesiastical Truth), December 12, 1998.

<sup>613</sup> Perepiolkina, *Ecumenism – A Path to Perdition*, St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 122. An earlier, Russian-

In 1992 the Pope said that he had two cardinals among the bishops in Russia, recalling the time of Nikodimovschina.<sup>614</sup> Perhaps one of them was Archbishop Lev.... Another of them may have been Archbishop Theodosius (Protsyuk) of Omsk, who, according to Perepiolkina, “has not only received legates from the Vatican and openly concelebrated with them, even the Divine Liturgy, but presented the well-known Verenfried with an ‘episcopal cross...’, thus becoming an inseparable friend’ of the wealthy Catholic sponsor.

“The practice of offering communion to the heterodox... is reaching epidemic proportions in the MP. This may be illustrated by the state of affairs in the Kaliningrad vicariate of the MP which is... ruled by Bishop Panteleimon (Kutov), a subordinate of Metropolitan Cyril (Gundyaev). In connection with the building project (still only a project, although some donations have already been collected a long time ago) for a Cathedral in the former Koenigsberg (now Kalinigrad), local parishioners hope that ‘this will be an Orthodox church not only by its name. Unfortunately, Bishop Panteleimon’s ecumenical views leave little hope that in the new Cathedral things will be any different from what they are now in the patriarchal churches of the Kaliningrad area, *where Orthodox people are offered communion from one chalice with heretics*. Bishop Panteleimon himself felt no embarrassment when he declared that ‘Catholics... partook of communion in our churches, and the priests offered prayers for them’.

“The ecumenical epidemic has spread to even the remotest areas. In accordance with the Balamand Agreement [of 1994], the same church buildings are now being regularly used by representatives of different denominations (particularly in the Baltic States). In the village of Yegla of Borovichi region of the Novgorod district they are building a church which *right at the start* will be intended for ecumenical services. It will have *three altars: Catholic, Protestant and ‘Orthodox’*. The number of such ecumenical prayer houses in Russia is growing.”<sup>615</sup>

On the first day of the new millennium, KGB Colonel Putin came to power in Russia. By contrast with Yeltsin in the 1990s, Putin turned the nation in a sharply anti-western direction, many elements of the Soviet past were resurrected, and the prestige and greatness of Russia were emphasized. He also returned to the tradition of Soviet leaders taking an active interest in Church matters.

This manifested itself in three ways. First, Putin worked hard to bring together the MP and ROCOR, the last bastion of anti-communist and anti-Catholic sentiment in the Russian Church. In 2007 the Churches were united under the leadership of the MP – although about 95% of ROCOR parishioners inside Russia

---

language edition of this important book is entitled *Ekumenizm - put' vedushchej k pogibeli* (Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1992).

<sup>614</sup> Perepiolkina, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>615</sup> Perepiolkina, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-214.

rejected the union.

Secondly, Putin's nationalist and anti-western stance increased the tensions between the two leaders of World Orthodoxy, the patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow. This rivalry began in the 1920s when Constantinople seized many of the canonical territories of the Russian Church (Poland, the Baltic States) and intervened in Russian Church affairs on the side of the renovationists. It revived after the Second World War, when Constantinople was seen as an agent of the American CIA just as the MP was seen as the agent of the Russian KGB. Since Putin's rise to power, the rivalry flared into open conflict in Estonia, Britain and, especially, Ukraine. After Putin's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine in 2014, many parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate left the MP and joined the Kievan Patriarchate, which is not recognized as canonical by Moscow but is supported by Constantinople.

Thirdly, Putin has used the Russian Church to exert influence on the Vatican, and has himself paid several visits to the Pope in Rome. Patriarch Cyril, like his predecessor, Alexis I, is pro-Catholic in the tradition of their common teacher (some would also say: lover), Metropolitan Nikodim. And both, like Nikodim, are KGB agents (Alexis was Agent "Drozdov", and Cyril is Agent "Mikhailov"). So their pro-Catholic activities must be approved by the KGB-run state as part of a wider political strategy to influence Western leaders and believers in a pro-Russian direction. In particular, it has been suggested that the KGB through Cyril wants the Pope to exert pressure on western leaders to ease sanctions placed on Russia because of her annexation of the Crimea...

However, Alexander Soldatov points out that Cyril's attachment to Catholicism is exceptional even in today's ecumenical climate: "Cyril, having begun his career at a very young age, has been at audiences with the Pope more than once. The last such meeting took place a year before his ascent of the patriarchal throne on December 7, 2007, when the living pope was Benedict XVI. In a small clip shown on Channel One, it is evident that Cyril is receiving the blessing of the Pope and kissing his hand. According to Catholic teaching, this is a sign of recognition of the special status of the Pope as the bishop of bishops, the bearer of the fourth level of the priesthood, which does not exist in the Orthodox Church. Alexis II was not very comfortable for the Pope as patriarch, and it is clear that the Vatican placed its cards on Cyril.

"The present patriarch does not share the traditional Orthodox attitude to Catholics as heretics.

"In the television programme 'A Pastor's Word', he has often preached the Catholic dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. 'Since the division of the churches in 1054 into the Orthodox and the Catholic,' says the patriarch, 'there have been no ecumenical councils. That means that formally speaking not a single ecumenical council has condemned the existing confessions

as heretical.’ Cyril interprets the ban on prayer with heretics that is contained in the canon law of the Orthodox Church only to prayers with his own, Orthodox but ‘schismatic’ people. It is true, however, that Metropolitan Hilarion, who also sympathizes with Catholicism, hastened to assure the Orthodox that there would be no joint prayers between the Pope and the Patriarch at the airport of Havana on February 12...”<sup>616</sup>

## **10. The Summit in Havana**

So what is the significance of the recent meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Cyril in Havana? First of all, the first-ever meeting between a Pope and a Russian Patriarch must indicate that Russia is in as imminent danger of being drawn into a *unia* with the Vatican as it was in 1612, when a crypto-Catholic Polish tsar was ruling in the Kremlin. Indeed, the danger is probably greater now for the simple reason that the leaders of the Russian Church are as compromised in their own way as the papacy itself, and can therefore offer far less effective opposition to the threat than the dying Patriarch Hermogen warned against from his freezing Kremlin prison. The long communiqué issued by the Pope and the Patriarch emphasized that the Catholics and the Orthodox were now “sister churches” – not a new concept (it was first proclaimed at Balamand in 1994), but one that has alarmed many Russian Orthodox Christians. Professor Olga Chetverikova has denounced the patriarch as a heretic, and several priests have ceased to commemorate him at the liturgy...

But what were the real aims of the two sides? Officially, they were concerned to present a common front against the persecution of Christians by Muslims in the Middle East. However, in view of the fact that both leaders have been exceptionally accommodating to Islam in true ecumenical fashion, this does not sound convincing.

Another suggested reason for the meeting was to facilitate an alliance of the two churches in support of “traditional Christian values” and against the general degradation of faith and morals in the world.<sup>617</sup> Patriarch Cyril’s “foreign affairs supremo”, Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev), even thinks that the two Churches should form “a single structure” in order to carry out this crusade more effectively – which would seem to imply the complete absorption of the Russian Church into the Roman Church! But again, the extreme moral corruption of both churches makes this hypothesis far from convincing. Thus the Catholic church

---

<sup>616</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.* “However, Bishop Diomed (Dziuban), who left the ROC MP in 2008, thinks there is no romanticism in Cyril’s attitude to Catholicism, only business [Cyril has a personal fortune calculated to be four billions dollars some years ago]. ‘They stash their money in western banks, they have business interests in the West. This is what propels them to march in tune with the Catholics and cooperate with them. For this they receive dividends from the Vatican.’”

<sup>617</sup> “The Geopolitics of Catholic-Orthodox Rapprochement”, February 11, 2016, <http://katehon.com/article/geopolitics-orthodox-catholic-rapprochement>.

had had to contend with widespread paedophilia among its priests, a moral and legal burden that is said to have all but broken the previous pope, Benedict XVI. As for the MP, not only is it “filthy rich”: Fr. Gleb Yakunin and Fr. Andrei Kuraiev have revealed the massive extent of homosexuality in the hierarchy.

A Catholic journalist, Andrea Gagliarducci, has put forward another, more likely hypothesis: that the MP is looking ahead to the Pan-Orthodox Synod, slated for June, 2016. “As the June gathering of the Pan-Orthodox Council approaches, Patriarch Kirill must show himself to be as close to Rome as Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who promoted and organized the Pan-Orthodox Council.

“Patriarch Bartholomew proved to be closer than ever to the Catholic Church during the Pope Francis pontificate. He was the first Orthodox Patriarch ever to take part to a Papal installation Mass. He was present at the global prayer for peace with Pope Francis in the Vatican Gardens in June 2014. He hosted the Pope at his headquarters in Istanbul during the papal visit to Turkey in November 2014.

“This way, Patriarch Bartholomew gained authority among the Orthodox Churches and was able to organize the Pan-Orthodox Council. This is a long-standing dream for the Constantinople Patriarchate that until now was unachievable.

“After meeting Pope Francis, Patriarch Kirill can go to the Pan-Orthodox Synod on a par with Patriarch Bartholomew. Both the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Patriarchate of Constantinople can claim a privileged and special relationship with the Catholic Church.”<sup>618</sup>

This suggests that the rivalry between Constantinople and Moscow may be bringing the unia of the Orthodox and the Catholics closer as the two patriarchs engage in a bidding war with the Pope as to which of them will be the second bishop in the post-union Christian world after “the Vicar of Christ”...

Be that as it may, one thing is certain: the papacy’s centuries-old dream of absorbing the Russian Church into itself is close to fulfilment. Therefore he who wishes to save his soul must flee from Babylon, the empire of false Christianity, as the apocalyptic voice from heaven says: “Come out of her, My people, lest you share in her sins and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities...” (Revelation 18.4-5).

*February 6/19, 2016.*

*St. Photius the Great, Patriarch of Constantinople.  
St. Theophan the New Recluse, Archbishop of Poltava.*

---

<sup>618</sup> Gagliarducci, “Four reasons why Pope Francis will meet with Patriarch Kirill”, *Catholic News Agency*, February 11, 2016.

### **35. THE SPIRITUAL STATUS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

What should be the attitude of True Orthodox Christians to the contemporary Russian State? Is it the true successor-state to the pre-revolutionary Russian empire, requiring that its citizens – and especially those citizens who call themselves Orthodox – obey it with zeal and express loyalty to it (even if privately critical of certain of its actions or leaders)? Or is it illegitimate, requiring that its citizens adopt a confessing stance in relation to it, refusing obedience at least in certain spheres (for example, the war in East Ukraine)? To put it more bluntly: is the present-day Russian Federation a true authority established by God (Romans 13.1)? Or is it akin to that apocalyptic beast of which the Holy Spirit says that its power is from the devil (Revelation 13.2)?

The Russian Orthodox Church was faced with this question shortly after the revolution in relation to the Soviet State, and came up with an unequivocal answer: the Soviet State is cursed by God, and no confessing Orthodox Christian can recognize it. Already on November 11, 1917 the Local Council of the Russian Church meeting in Moscow declared that Soviet power was “descended from the Antichrist and possessed by atheism”: “Open combat is fought against the Christian Faith, in opposition to all that is sacred, arrogantly abasing all that bears the name of God (II Thessalonians 2.4)... But no earthly kingdom founded on ungodliness can ever survive: it will perish from internal strife and party dissension. Thus, because of its frenzy of atheism, the State of Russia will fall... For those who use the sole foundation of their power in the coercion of the whole people by one class, no motherland or holy place exists. They have become traitors to the motherland and instigated an appalling betrayal of Russia and her true allies. But, to our grief, as yet no government has arisen which is sufficiently one with the people to deserve the blessing of the Orthodox Church. And such will not appear on Russian soil until we turn with agonizing prayer and tears of repentance to Him, without Whom we labour in vain to lay foundations...”

This attitude was confirmed and sealed by his Holiness Patriarch Tikhon in his famous anathema against the Bolsheviks on January 18 / February 1, 1918, which was enthusiastically endorsed by the whole Council some days later. The holy patriarch, who was martyred for the Faith in 1925, exhorted the faithful to have “no dealings whatsoever” with “those outcasts of humanity”, the Bolsheviks. Some have argued that this anathema was addressed only to individual Bolsheviks who carried out acts of sacrilege against the Church and believers. However, in 1923 the patriarch confirmed that he had anathematized precisely “the Soviet state”. Moreover, the anathema fell not only on the Bolsheviks, but also on all those who cooperated with them.

An anathema on a state is unprecedented in Orthodox history. The only possible parallels are the virtual declaration of war on Julian the Apostate by

SS. Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, and the Russian Synod's anathematization of Napoleon in 1806...

Tragically, however, only a minority of the Russian people obeyed the command of the holy patriarch. In the decades that followed, the great majority either openly joined the atheist frenzy, or, while remaining formally Orthodox, fell away into one or other of the many pro-Soviet church schisms, such as the "Living Church" schism of 1922, or the "Sergianist" schism of 1927 (i.e. the present-day Moscow Patriarchate). By the beginning of the Second World War, those who remained obedient to the patriarch's anathema had either been sent to the Gulag, where most of them perished, or had fled into the catacombs, where they formed the "Catacomb" or "True Orthodox" Church. Outside Russia, the Russian Church Abroad supported the Catacomb Church. But there, too, pro-Soviet schisms undermined and weakened the witness of True Orthodoxy.

After the Second World War, the Catacomb Church, under enormous pressure from the KGB and the KGB-ruled patriarchate, became smaller and smaller, retreating further and further into the catacombs. In the West, meanwhile, the Russian Church Abroad also became weaker, in spite of the witness of such anti-Soviet giants as St. John Maximovich (+1966), Archbishop Averky of Jordanville (+1976) and St. Philaret of New York (+1985). By the time the Soviet Union fell in 1991, two pressing problems threatened the very existence of the confessing Russian Church.

The first was the lack of Catacomb bishops. This problem was solved by the Russian Church Abroad ordaining two catacomb clergy to the episcopate – Archbishop Lazarus of Tambov and Odessa, and Bishop Benjamin of the Kuban and Black Sea. Soon the True Orthodox Christians of Russia had a fully canonical hierarchy again, whose present-day leader is Archbishop Tikhon of Omsk and Siberia...

The second, more difficult problem was: how to define the status of the new, post-Soviet Russian state, and therefore the Church's attitude towards it. Here a sharp division emerged between the great majority of the Church's flock inside Russia, the Catacomb or True Orthodox Church, and the majority of the flock of their brothers outside Russia, the Russian Church Abroad. Inside Russia, the believers did not trust the changes that had taken place; for them, the leopard had not changed its spots (Jeremiah 13.23), the communists had merely assumed the mask of "democrats", the wolves had simply put on sheep's clothing while remaining inwardly as ravenous as before (Matthew 7.15). Outside Russia, on the other hand, most believers were displaying signs of "war weariness"; they wanted to believe that the Soviet Union had miraculously changed into a normal State overnight, that the KGB had disappeared, that the communists had repented, etc. When V.V. Putin came to power in 2000, this attitude intensified as nationalist feelings became mixed

up with dogmatic and canonical issues; and in 2007 the Russian Church Abroad threw in the towel and was united with the Moscow Patriarchate, acknowledging the legitimacy of the Russian State.

\*

Now, over twenty-five years since the beginning of perestroika, we are in a better position to judge who were right: those inside or those outside Russia, and to what extent, and how, Russia has really been “reconstructed”.

One fact is not in dispute: Marxism-Leninism, the official ideology of the Soviet Union, has disappeared into the dustbin of history. There might still be a few “true believers” in the Russian Communist Party (or in the “Donetsk People’s Republic”). But if we are looking for convinced Marxists, we are more likely to find them in North Korea or Nepal or Zimbabwe or Venezuela - or even in Paris, New York or Glasgow - than in “the homeland of the revolution”.

But how significant is this fact? Not at all if we remember that the essence of communism does not reside in Marxist ideology, but in the demonic spirit that tries to overthrow all God-established authorities. As the holy Elder Aristocles of Moscow and Mount Athos (+1918) said some years before the revolution to the future Abbess Barbara of the St. Mary Magdalene convent in Gethsemane: “An evil will shortly take Russia, and wherever this evil goes, rivers of blood will flow. It is not the Russian soul, but an imposition on the Russian soul. It is not an ideology, nor a philosophy, but *a spirit from hell*.”

A spirit from hell... So if we are to determine the question whether the Russia of today has really been liberated from Sovietism, we have to ask: has that hellish spirit been exorcised? Is the demon-possessed body of Soviet Russia now at peace?

Spiritual diseases require spiritual treatments. So the spiritual sickness of Soviet Russia could only be cured by the spiritual cure of *repentance*. At the beginning of the 1990s there was a brief moment when the repentance of Russia looked possible, as thousands of people threw in their party cards in response to revelations of the shocking crimes of the Soviet period. But the stubborn spirit of rebellion quickly staged a comeback. In 1992 a “trial” of the Soviet Communist Party came up with the verdict: “Not Guilty”! In the same year, a parliamentary commission unearthed incontrovertible evidence that the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate were KGB agents - but not a single patriarchal bishop repented or resigned! Meanwhile, the KGB itself, after a short-lived scare, recovered its poise and set about planning the next stage in the revolution... If the leaders of Church and State refused to repent, it is not surprising that the people as a whole were also impenitent...



At the beginning of the new millennium, the KGB, and with it the evil spirit of Sovietism, returned to full power. Ten years before there had been three centres of power – the Party, the Army and the KGB. Now there was only one, the KGB; and its agents quickly filled all the more powerful posts in government.

As Kerensky had paved the way for Lenin in 1917, so now the first and last democratic president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, passed on power to V.V. Putin, a little-known agent who had started his career by spying on Church dissidents in Leningrad. He promptly declared that the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 had been “the greatest geo-political tragedy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” - and set about restoring the Union.

Of course, this regression has been gradual and concealed in various ways; but nearly fifteen years later, the family resemblance to the pre-perestroika Soviet Union is unmistakable. In marked contrast to the Ukraine, where the statues of Lenin have been falling everywhere, in Russia there has been a revival of the cult.<sup>619</sup> The Patriarch of Moscow has even given an award to the head of the Russian Communist Party, Gennady Ziuganov...

Before the revolution, St. John of Kronstadt said that Russia without a tsar would be “a stinking corpse”. His prophecy has proved accurate, not only for the Soviet period, but also for the post-Soviet period, which should more precisely be called the neo-Soviet period. St. John’s opinion was echoed by the last true elder of the Russian Church Abroad, Archimandrite Nektary of Eleon (+2000): “For him, all governments in Russia after the overthrow of the Tsar on March 2, 1917 – whether the February-democratic government, the Bolshevik, or another – were enemies of God.”<sup>620</sup> And it was confirmed again by the Holy Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Russia under Archbishop Lazarus (Zhurbenko), which on May 28 / June 10, 2004 called the Russian state “a regime that carries out the dechristianization of the Russian people, waging a campaign of moral corruption and encouraging its physical dying out”. To bless such a regime, the Synod concluded, would be “a grave crime against the Christian conscience”.<sup>621</sup>

Only a truly Orthodox tsardom can be a legitimate government for Russia – or a Provisional Government that consciously prepares the way for the return of Autocracy and unambiguously condemns the lawlessness of all that has taken place in Russian governmental life since February, 1917.<sup>622</sup>

---

<sup>619</sup> See Igumen Andrei (Erastov), “Po povodu krizisa v Ukraine”, October 17, 2014, <http://readerdanielsharing.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/blog-post.html>.

<sup>620</sup> Isaak Gindis, in Archimandrite Nektary (Chernobyl’), *Vospominania*, Jordanville, 2002, p. 7.

<sup>621</sup> <http://www.catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=2069>.

<sup>622</sup> Alexander Nikitin, “Chto zhe trebuietsa ot pravitel’sstva dlia priznania ego perekhodnym k zakonnomu?” (“What is required of a government for its recognition as transitional to a lawful one?”) *Vozvrashchenie (Return)*, № 2, 1993, pp. 6-8.

So we conclude that the truly Orthodox Church can in no way pray for a state that still remains under the anathema of Patriarch Tikhon of 1918, which sees itself as the heir of the Soviet Union, is working openly for the restoration of that empire, and whose continued existence is the main obstacle to the only cure that will heal the ills of Russia: *national repentance*. If physical resistance is impossible, then spiritual resistance is both possible and obligatory. For “friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4.4).

*September 18/ October 1, 2014; revised October 30 / November 12, 2014 and May 1/14, 2016.*

*St. Tamara, Queen of Georgia.*

### **36. IS THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE CRUMBLING AT LAST?**

Generations of True Orthodox Christians, both in the Catacomb Church and in the Russian Church Abroad, have understood that the key to the resurrection of Holy Russia, and therefore to the salvation of millions around the world, lies in the fall of the heretical and apostate Moscow Patriarchate, and its replacement by a truly Orthodox hierarchy that clearly and unambiguously renounces sergianism and ecumenism and all communion with the ecumenist hierarchs of World Orthodoxy. The prophecies of the Valaam elders declare that such a resurrection and radical cleansing of the Russian Church will take place through a True Orthodox Tsar who will be elected by the True Orthodox people at a time of national humiliation. However, as many have rightly warned, such a longed-for event will not take place until the people as a whole – or at any rate, a significant percentage of it – show by their deeds that they have truly repented of sergianism and ecumenism and are ready to receive the true faith of the One True Church.

In this connection, the recent meeting of Pope Francis and Patriarch Cyril in Havana may prove to be a significant turning-point. The meeting – which, as Cyril admitted, was made known beforehand to only five people, – was accompanied by the publication of a communiqué in which the two churches clearly recognized each other as “sister churches” in the spirit of the notorious Balamand agreement of 1994. As if finally waking up to the reality of what has been happening between Rome and Moscow for several decades, many priests and laymen from Moscow to Belorussia to Moldova are calling Cyril a heretic and refusing to commemorate him in their services. Only a few believe one priest’s theory: that the Pope wants to become Orthodox!<sup>623</sup> The truth is: it is the patriarch who is in spirit a Catholic already...

\*

Of course, something like this happened once before, after the famous “our prophets – your prophets” speech of Patriarch Alexis II to the New York rabbis in November, 1991. Then many priests stopped commemorating the patriarch for his blasphemous recognition of Judaism. In 1992, the president of the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods, Sergius Poliakov, declared that the patriarch’s speech to the New York rabbis had been “clearly heretical”. And a representative of the Tver diocese declared that “almost 60% of the diocesan clergy” were refusing to commemorate the patriarch.<sup>624</sup> Unfortunately, only

---

<sup>623</sup> “RPTs: Papa Rimskij khoschet byt’ pravoslavnym”, *Styler*, February 26, 2016, <https://www.rbc.ua/styler/zhizn/rpts-papa-rimskiy-hochet-pravoslavnym-1456494541.html>.

<sup>624</sup> *Priamoj Put’* (The Straight Path), February, 1992, p. 5; E. Polyakov, “Khronika Tserkovnoj Zhizni v Yanvare-Fevrale 1992 g.” (A Chronicle of Church Life in January-February, 1992) (MS), p. 2.

one of those priests actually joined the True Church...<sup>625</sup>

At that time the MP was able to face down its dissidents. Thus in December, 1994, the patriarchate's participation in the WCC was unequivocally endorsed as having been inspired "primarily by considerations of the good it would do for the Church". Then a purge of the anti-ecumenist brotherhoods began.<sup>626</sup> The decision was made to permit common prayers with heretics with the blessing of the local bishop!<sup>627</sup> And with the death in 1995 of the only anti-ecumenist in the hierarchy, Metropolitan John (Snychev) of St. Petersburg, the victory of the ecumenists appeared to be sealed.

However, in December, 1995 a group of about fifty Moscow clergy addressed an open letter to the patriarch denouncing the "crypto-catholic" teaching and actions of several modernist priests and laity in the capital. They pointed to numerous instances of the MP offering direct assistance to Latin propaganda, listing ecumenical or purely Catholic radio stations ("Sophia", "Blagovest") and periodicals (*Simvol, Istina i Zhizn', Novaia Evropa, Russkaia Mysl'*). Active contributors and sometimes even managers of these organs of Latin propaganda included Archpriest Ioann Sviridov (Department of the Religious Education and Catechization of the MP), Igumen Innokenty (Pavlov) (Secretary of the Russian Bible Society), Priest Alexander Borisov (President of the same Society), Igumen Ignaty (Krekshin) (Secretary of the Synodal Commission for the Canonization of Saints of the ROC), Igumen Ioann (Ekonomtsev) (Rector of the Orthodox University of St. John the Theologian), V. Nikitin (chief editor of the official journal of the Department of Religious Education and Catechization *Put' Pravoslavia*), the "priest journalists" G. Chistiakov and V. Lapshin, Priest G. Ziablitsev (employee in the Department of External Church Relations of the MP), who was appointed by his superior, Metropolitan Cyril (Gundyaev), to the commission of the Catholic Church (!) for the canonization of one of their saints. "Such a scandalous fact," wrote the fifty clergy, "i.e. participation in a heterodox enterprise of a canonical character, has not been heard of since the Latins fell away from the Church of Christ in 1054... One is left with the impression that the Vatican is attempting to create within the Church a layer of clergy loyal to the Catholic doctrine who serve the cause of union."<sup>628</sup>

---

<sup>625</sup> *Russkii Pastyr'*, (Russian Pastor), № 30, I-1998, p. 86. Cf. Fr. Timothy Alferov, "Nekotorie uroki dvizhenia 'nepominaishchikh' (Some Lessons of the Movement of the Non-Commemorators), *Russkii Pastyr'* (Russian Pastor), № 19, II-1994, pp. 102-104.

<sup>626</sup> A. Soldatov, "Obnovlenie ili obnovenchestvo?" (Renovation or Renovationism?), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), № 20 (1521), October 15/28, 1994, pp. 6-9; *Service Orthodoxe de Presse* (Orthodox Press Service), № 194, January, 1995, pp. 7-10 (F); V.N. Osipov, "Pravoslavnoe serdtse na vetru", *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), № 2 (1527), January 15/28, 1995, pp. 14-15.

<sup>627</sup> Perepiolkina, *Ekumenizm: Put' k pogibeli*, p. 205; from the Documents and Reports of the Council published by the MP in 1995, p. 191.

<sup>628</sup> Perepiolkina, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-216.

The patriarch deflected this protest by complaining about Catholic proselytism and their use of humanitarian aid as a cover for their missionary work in Russia.<sup>629</sup> It is not recorded, however, that he rejected the offer of one Catholic organization, "Aid to the Suffering Church", to give every priest in the Russian Church an annual salary of \$1000.<sup>630</sup> Nor was he particularly disturbed when the Pope was declared an honorary member of the new parish of the MP in Ulyanovsk in gratitude for his sending \$14,000 for the construction of the city's cathedral. Nor when, in 1996, "Aid to the Suffering Church" gave \$750,000 to Radio "Sophia"...<sup>631</sup> The patriarch's right hand (his criticism of the Catholics) clearly did not know what his left hand (his reception of largesse from them) was doing...

However, the anti-ecumenist unrest of the early 1990s was successfully suppressed by the MP (as similar disturbances were suppressed in other Orthodox countries by the hierarchs of World Orthodoxy). Two important events contributed to this unfortunate outcome. The first was the failure of the mission of the Russian Church Abroad inside Russia. ROCOR under St. Philaret of New York had anathematized ecumenism in 1983, and her anti-sergianism and anti-ecumenism had been very influential among MP clergy who were now for the first time able to read non-Soviet church literature, and learn the truth about the history of twentieth-century Orthodoxy. However, divisions inside ROCOR, and a successful MP campaign slandering ROCOR as an American church under the control of the CIA, arrested the growth of ROCOR parishes in Russia as the country as a whole moved sharply against the West and all things western.

The second event was the rise to power in the year 2000 of KGB Colonel V.V. Putin, who gradually began moving the nation back towards "Orthodox" Sovietism with a Fascist face. The MP's KGB hierarchs willingly joined in this pseudo-resurrection of Holy Rus', especially as it stood to gain financially from it. Thus the new Patriarch Cyril (Agent "Mikhailov") was reported to have made a personal fortune of \$4 billion, gained through the duty-free import of alcohol and tobacco, and to be involved in still more morally dubious ventures.<sup>632</sup> In 2009 he proclaimed the astonishingly blasphemous idea that the anti-theist Red Army's barbarous victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 had somehow expiated the sins of the 1930s, and that

---

<sup>629</sup> *Service Orthodoxe de Presse* (Orthodox Press Service), № 204, January, 1996, p. 13

<sup>630</sup> "Wages for Popes", *30 Days*, № 66, 1994; reprinted in "Vatican Diary", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, January 2/15, 1995, pp. 7-8.

<sup>631</sup> Perepiolkina, *op. cit.*, pp. 205, 217-219.

<sup>632</sup> V. Moss, "Patriarch Cyril, Abortion, Gays and the Goddess Aphrodite", in *The Battle for the Russian Orthodox Church*, [https://www.academia.edu/22378447/THE\\_BATTLE\\_FOR\\_THE\\_RUSSIAN\\_ORTHODOX\\_CHURCH](https://www.academia.edu/22378447/THE_BATTLE_FOR_THE_RUSSIAN_ORTHODOX_CHURCH).

Stalin had thereby “trampled on death by death”.<sup>633</sup> The tepid reaction of Church society to these ever more extreme manifestations of the MP’s apostasy was discouraging, to say the least.

\*

However, it looks now as if the MP may have finally overstepped the mark. Putin’s invasion of the Ukraine, with its disastrous consequences for relations with the West and for the Russian economy, is eliciting increasing criticism. And Cyril’s slavish following of Putin in all things – the price, of course, of his church’s large share in Putin’s ill-gotten gains – is far from universally admired. Again, many parishes in the “Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate” are deserting to other jurisdictions such as the Kievan Patriarchate, which is recognized by Constantinople but not by Moscow. Cyril calls them “schismatics”, and blames uniatic propaganda by nationalist “Banderites” – but is thereby placing his sceptical Ukrainian flock in an increasingly difficult position, having to choose between loyalties to the Russian church and to the Ukrainian state.

Undoubtedly concern over the worsening situation in the Ukraine was the main motivation for Cyril’s meeting with the Pope in Havana. For his master Putin’s sake, he wants the Pope to exert his influence to weaken the West’s sanctions regime against Russia. And for his own sake, he wants the Pope to recognize the canonicity of the MP in the Ukraine rather than that of Kievan Patriarchate, which is backed by his chief global competitor, the Patriarch of Constantinople. But for many in the Russian Church these essentially political issues were less important than the issue of *the faith*: that their patriarch had publicly recognized the world’s number one heretic. And the patriarch must have known that this would be a problem. For why else would he conceal the meeting from all except five people? He must have sensed that public announcement of the meeting a long time in advance risked eliciting a powerful negative response that might have endangered the meeting taking place – and he was right.

This leads us to think that it will be more difficult, perhaps impossible, for the MP to shrug off the anti-ecumenist reaction in the way it did twenty years ago. Although pro-Catholic ecumenism has been a fact of life in the MP since the time of the notorious Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) – who as well as being the mentor of the present patriarch was simultaneously KGB Agent “Sviatoslav”, metropolitan of Leningrad, and a secret Catholic bishop, and died at the feet of Pope John-Paul I, having received communion from him – there is a big difference between metropolitans signing ecumenist agreements with Catholic cardinals and this meeting at the highest level between the Pope and the Patriarch – something that has never taken place before in

---

<sup>633</sup> V. Moss, “God 1945 I ‘Bogoslovie Pobedy’ v Moskovskoj Patriarkhii”, <https://www.academia.edu/10213748/1945>

history. The symbolism of the papal-patriarchal meeting is more direct more powerful – and much more dangerous for the internal stability of the MP.

Another difference between 2016 and the early 1990s is that the clergy are more educated now; they have outgrown the ecumenist Paris theologians that were so popular in the early 1990s and are now familiar with stronger, strictly patristic food in the form of the writings of St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, St. Theophan the Recluse and Archbishop Averky of Jordanville. And while the anti-ecumenist ROCOR has been crushed – and, since 2007, absorbed into the MP – the seeds it sowed in the earlier period have sunk into the earth of the MP's consciousness. Ecumenism is now widely recognized as a heresy; the metropolitan of Vladivostok has even called publicly for the MP's withdrawal from all ecumenist organizations, including the World Council of Churches, which the present patriarch once famously called "our common home"...

Paradoxically, Putin's anti-western policies may have indirectly contributed to the impending unia. For just as Putin may thunder against the West's moral vices, but has no intention of depriving himself of western pleasures himself, so Cyril may thunder against Banderites and schismatics, but has no intention of foregoing his friendship with the world's number one heretic. And just as Putin and Russia's secular elite still send their children to western schools, live in fabulously grand houses in the evil West, deposit their money in London banks, cruise the world in western yachts, buy western football clubs and build villas on the Mediterranean coast of France and Spain, so Cyril and Russia's ecclesiastical elite drive around in limousines, buy rolex watches, have usually homosexual lovers and engage in extremely profitable and immoral business deals in imitation of their secular rulers. So, far from building up a true spiritual and moral alternative to western civilization, Church and State in Russia are simply showing themselves to be a deeply corrupt extension of that same civilization. Only the Russians are worse than the westerners they ape because their sins are compounded by the vast legacy of the unrepented mega-crimes of the Soviet period, and the terrible guilt and hypocrisy that comes from knowing what Orthodoxy is, and trumpeting their "Orthodoxy" to the skies, while denying it in practice.

\*

Finally, one may ask: now that the MP is returning to that ecumenism from which it was supposed to have liberated itself as a condition of its union with ROCOR in 2007, will not ROCOR-MP rise up in protest and denounce the treachery of their patriarch? The tragic but predictable answer is: ROCOR-MP are the *last* people who will rebel against the heretic. For having betrayed Christ and His Holy Church in 2007, they are too proud to admit their treachery, but are rather trying to justify themselves by an exaggerated

justification of their MP masters.

As an example of this lamentable spiritual condition, let us take a recent article by Fr. Andrew Phillips, a ROCOR-MP priest.<sup>634</sup> Phillips is a very intelligent man who has written excellent things on Orthodox England, and good things on the corruption of the West. But, having consciously taken part in ROCOR's Judas act of 2007, his views on Russia are wildly misguided.

Phillips believes that resistance to the Anti-Christian empire of the West is coming from "what is organically reviving in the place of the old Soviet Empire – the Sacral Christian Empire of Rus". Phillips seems to forget the words of the Lord: "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them." (Matthew 7.16-20).

The fruits of Putin's reign have been unequivocally evil. On every index of social malfunction – suicide, alcoholism, child mortality, drug-taking – Russia comes in the first or second place in the United Nations rankings. This would be impossible if Russia were a truly Orthodox country, a good fruit from a good tree. But in fact Putin has done everything to demonstrate his and his regime's roots in the ultra-evil tree of Soviet power. The same applies to the Soviet church of the Moscow Patriarchate. It has repented of none of its heresies; the moral evil of its hierarchy – especially its homosexuality – is tolerated and its practitioners promoted; True Orthodoxy is persecuted.

Phillips continues with the familiar KGB lies that Russia was invaded *from* Georgia in 2008, and that in 2014 the "legitimate" authority of the Ukraine was overthrown in a western coup. We will not dwell on these myths, since they are not central to our ecclesiastical theme. More relevant are these words of his: "Slandering and even destruction can come in two other ways... The first is by infiltrating the nascent Christian Empire with modernism, which is what individuals have been trying to do in recent years and especially now with the divisive draft documents for the Crete meeting of selected Orthodox bishops next June. The second way is protesting against those unacceptable documents in a divisive and even schismatic way, exactly as Metr Onufry of Kiev and others predicted." It is astonishing that Phillips thinks that modernism in World Orthodoxy comes only from certain "selected Orthodox bishops" who do not include his own patriarch. As if the meeting of the pope and the patriarch were not modernism, and their joint communiqué not

---

<sup>634</sup> Phillips, "The Anti-Christian Empire and the Resistance Movement", *Orthodox England*, February 21, 2016, <http://www.events.orthodoxengland.org.uk/the-anti-christian-empire-and-the-resistance-movement>.



“unacceptable” no less than any of the draft documents he mentions. Evidently, leaving True Orthodoxy and joining the modernist MP and World Orthodoxy has made Phillips a dyed-in-the-wool ecumenist!

But even Phillips cannot ignore the protests against his patriarch that have begun in his own false church, “with several perhaps hot-headed priests in Moldova no longer commemorating their bishops. Other individuals are following. We suggest that this is an error. Two wrongs do not make a right. However understandable, the far better method of protest is, as we have suggested, for monasteries and parishes simply to petition their diocesan bishops stating that we do not accept the draft documents and that if they are accepted in Crete, we will tear them up, refusing to receive them.”

Phillips suggests that these non-commemorating priests are “hot-headed” and “in error”, and then goes on to assert that “the temptation of non-commemoration is a simplistic error of schismatic proportions”. Logically speaking, he should say the same about all the hierarchs of ROCOR throughout its history, and declare St. Philaret, who anathematized the whole of World Orthodoxy to be a hot-headed schismatic, and St. John Maximovich, who bitterly repented of having once commemorated Patriarch Alexis I, to have succumbed to “the temptation of non-commemoration” But these were great men who were capable of repentance and taught it to their right-believing flock. Phillips is a turncoat who is now engaged in whitewashing the Pharisaic KGB agents and ecumenist heretics whom he serves and who are destroying what little is left of Holy Russia. Russia will indeed be resurrected, as the true prophets proclaimed – but only when the people steadfastly block their ears to the false prophets like Phillips who call evil good and good evil, who hypocritically denounce the supposed perverters of Orthodoxy while themselves promoting the neo-Soviet Anti-Christian Empire and its Soviet puppet-church!

*February 17 /March 1, 2016.*

*St. Hermogen, Patriarch of Moscow, who was martyred by the Latins in 1612.*